

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 24 October 2019

Public Authority: Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service (The MPS)

Address: New Scotland Yard
Broadway
London
SW1H 0BG

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested information about recorded blackmail crimes in 2017/18 and 2018/19.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that the MPS has breached section 10(1) of the FOIA in that it failed to provide a valid response to the request within the statutory time frame of 20 working days.
3. The Commissioner requires the MPS to take the following step to ensure compliance with the legislation.
 - The MPS must provide a substantive response to the request in accordance with its obligations under the FOIA.
4. The MPS must take this step within 35 calendar days of the date of this decision notice. Failure to comply may result in the Commissioner making written certification of this fact to the High Court pursuant to section 54 of the FOIA and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

Request and response

5. On 21 June 2019, the complainant wrote to the MPS and requested information in the following terms:

"Could you carry out the same searches as in FOI request 2017080000342 and complaint 2017100000791 within the time limits?"

6. The MPS acknowledged the request on 25 June 2019. To date, a substantive response has not been issued.

Scope of the case

7. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 26 July 2019 to complain about the MPS' failure to respond to their request.
8. The Commissioner has considered whether the MPS has complied with its obligations in relation to the time for compliance at section 10(1) of the FOIA.

Reasons for decision

9. Section 1(1) of the FOIA states that:

"Any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled –

(a) to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request, and

(b) if that is the case, to have that information communicated to him."

10. Section 10(1) of the FOIA states that a public authority must respond to a request promptly and *"not later than the twentieth working day following the date of receipt"*.
11. On 14 August 2019 the Commissioner wrote to the MPS, reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant within ten working days.
12. Despite this intervention the MPS has failed to respond to the complainant.
13. From the evidence provided to the Commissioner in this case, it is clear that the MPS did not deal with the request for information in accordance with the FOIA. The Commissioner finds that the MPS has breached section 10(1) by failing to respond to the request within 20 working days and it is now required to respond to the request in accordance with the FOIA.

Right of appeal

14. Either party has the right to appeal against this decision notice to the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights). Information about the appeals process may be obtained from:

First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights)
GRC & GRP Tribunals
PO Box 9300
LEICESTER
LE1 8DJ

Tel: 0300 1234504
Fax: 0870 739 5836
Email: grc@justice.gov.uk
Website: www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber

15. If you wish to appeal against a decision notice, you can obtain information on how to appeal along with the relevant forms from the Information Tribunal website.
16. Any Notice of Appeal should be served on the Tribunal within 28 (calendar) days of the date on which this decision notice is sent.

Signed

Sarah O’Cathain
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Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF