

Date: 18th March 2024
Our ref: FOI/24/012235/Y

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: FOI/24/012235/Y

I write in connection with your request for information dated 27/02/2024, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

Under the Freedom of Information Act, could you provide me with the number of blackmail crimes, in each of the past three financial years (April 1 to March 31 - 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23) and the current financial year to date (April 1 2023 to date), where a webcam has been involved in some way, i.e. where either webcam, web cam, video or social media are mentioned in the summary of the report.

Could you provide a summary of each report, including outcome, and state whether the alleged victim was aged under 16, 16 to 18 or over 18.

Please could you also provide me with a count of the number of crimes recorded as threatening to/disclosing private images in each of the past three financial years (April 1 to March 31 - 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23) and the current financial year to date (April 1 2023 to date). Again, please provide information about outcomes for these and a breakdown by whether the alleged victim was aged under 16, 16 to 18 or over 18.

Result of Searches

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to locate information relevant to your request. I can confirm that the information you have requested is held by GMP. However, I am not obliged to supply you with all the information as an exemption applies to part of your request. The part exempt is '***Could you provide a summary of each report***'.

The Freedom of Information Act is a piece of legislation designed to give the public access to information held by public authorities. It exists to make the decisions of those authorities transparent and to keep the populace better informed regarding matters which affect them.

A Public Authority is able to refuse requests which can divert resources away from more deserving requests and other public business, or threaten to undermine the credibility of the freedom of information system. It is recognised that dealing with unreasonable requests can place a strain on resources and get in the way of delivering mainstream services. This is particularly relevant at this time due to the ongoing demand on GMP's FOI unit which is currently experiencing high workloads and reduced levels of staffing.

When identifying potentially vexatious requests the indicators contained within the Information Commissioner's guidance on Section 14(1) should be considered. In this case we feel the following indicator applies:

Burden on the Authority

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 14(1) of FOIA a request deemed as overly burdensome does not oblige GMP to comply with a request for information.

The ICO confirms within their guidance that they consider there to be a high threshold for refusing a request on such grounds if there is a viable case in line with the below recommendations:

- 1) The requester has asked for a substantial volume of information and
- 2) The authority has real concerns about potentially exempt information, which it will be able to substantiate if asked to do so by the ICO and
- 3) Any potentially exempt information cannot easily be isolated because it is scattered throughout the requested material.

As such part of your request is being refused due to the amount of time required to review and prepare the information for disclosure, which would impose a grossly oppressive burden on the organisation.

To provide the data requested for 'a summary of each report', would involve manual redactions to each piece of data as they do contain sensitive and personal information which could identify directly/indirectly a living human therefore Section 40(2) Personal Information will be engaged as this represents information that identifies a living individual, to disclose this information would breach the principles of the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Personal data is defined by Article 4 of the GDPR and Part 1 of the Data Protection Act 2018, and means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). An identified natural person is one who can be identified directly or indirectly from that data.

The volume of blackmail crimes is 5,549 and therefore at a very conservative estimate 5 minutes to review and redact each piece of data in the summary field, it would take approximately 462 hours to ascertain the data required.

For this reason, any further requests of this nature will be refused under Section 14(1) of the Act, which states that requests that are considered to be vexatious do not have to be complied with.

However, please see below for the results for all the other questions.

Caveats:

In July 2019, GMP implemented one of the largest IT infrastructure changes in UK policing. The systems are in continual development and the data provided for this request is what the systems currently hold.

1. The crime totals are for the financial years 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 respectively.
2. The month relates to when the crime was recorded and not when the crime was committed.

3. Where possible duplicates have been removed.
4. The HO Codes used can be found below.
5. In respect of the Blackmail crimes the keywords 'web cam', 'webcam', 'video' & 'social media' have been searched on.
6. In respect of the crimes where a Person is threatening to disclose private pictures this would fall within the Blackmail category. Therefore, total Blackmail crimes has also been included.

Class	Sub Class	Offence Category	Offence	Full HO Code
Theft	Other theft	35 Blackmail	Blackmail	035/00
Violence Against The Person	Stalking and Harassment	8R Malicious Communications	Disclose private sexual photographs with intent to cause distress	008/71

Financial Year	Volume Blackmail Crimes	Volume involving webcam	Under 16 Years	16 - 17 Years	18+ Years
2020/ 21	297	106	5	7	94
2021/ 22	1,236	484	21	35	428
2022/ 23	1,856	588	27	54	507
2023/ 24	2,160	584	32	41	511

Financial Year	Volume Disclosing Private Images	Under 16 Years	16 - 17 Years	18+ Years
2020/21	351	28	29	294
2021/22	486	38	30	418
2022/23	545	41	33	471
2023/24	516	40	33	443

Due to the low numbers returned, the outcome totals have been merged together as by providing all this information split by outcome and year as you have requested would significantly increase the likelihood of identifying the individual(s) concerned, and as such the exemption under S40(2) – Personal Information, would be engaged and result in information being refused. By merging this data it can be provided in its entirety.

Blackmail Data Outcomes	Total
Decision Pending	7
Eliminated	2
Evidential Difficulties Victim Based - No Suspect Identified	461
Investigation Complete - No Suspect Identified	1156
Locate Trace	3
Missing Value	9
Offender has died	1
Outcome 20 - Referred to Other Agency	1
Refer to PNC	2
Summons	1

Suspect Identified-Insufficient Evidence CPS	1
Suspect Identified-Insufficient Evidence Police	39
Suspect Identified-Insufficient Other	3
Suspect Identified-Victim Does not Support	75
Master Crime Not Gmp	1

Private Image Outcomes	Total
A Community Resolution (with or without formal restorative justice) (Formal Police Diversion Scheme)	4
A Community Resolution (with or without formal restorative justice) (Informal Police Action)	3
Adult Caution	7
Adult Caution Alternative Offence	1
Charge	70
Charged Alternative Offence	10
Decision Pending	66
Diversionary, Educational, Intervention complete. Further action not in public interest.	4
Eliminated	2
Evidential Difficulties Victim Based - No Suspect Identified	219
Further Invest Not in Public Interest (Pol)	23
Investigation Complete - No Suspect Identified	301
Locate Trace	22
Missing Value	21
Named Susp-Vict Dead/Too Ill	1
Offender Has Died	2
Outcome 20 - Referred to Other Agency	11
Prosecution Not in Public Interest (Pol)	1
Refer To Pnc	4
Restorative Justice 1	5
Restorative Justice 2	3
Suspect Identified-Insufficient Evidence CPS	49
Suspect Identified-Insufficient Evidence Police	375
Suspect Identified-Insufficient Other	8
Suspect Identified-Victim Does not Support	683
Youth Caution	3