

Date: 05/02/2024
Our ref: 01/FOI/24/012015/O

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/24/012015/O

I write in connection with your request for information dated 24/01/2024, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

1) Please can you state for theft offences recorded by your force, the number in which the crime report text (described as modus operandi reports by many forces) contains a mention of "handbag" in each of the following calendar years:

- i) 2019***
- ii) 2020***
- iii) 2021***
- iv) 2022***
- v) 2023***

2) Please can you provide a redacted copy of the free text crime reports for these offences recorded by your force between October and December 2023.

Result of Searches

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to locate the requested information and I can confirm the information requested is held by GMP.

However, I am not obliged to supply you with all the information as an exemption applies to question 2 - ***Please can you provide a redacted copy of the free text crime reports for these offences recorded by your force between October and December 2023.***

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 can 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 specifically to question 2 of your request:

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, Q2 - ***Please can you provide a redacted copy of the free text crime reports for these offences recorded by your force between October and December 2023*** 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 question 2, would involve manual redactions to each piece of data in the *MO Description Text* 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 number of *crimes* between October – December 2023 is **438**. Therefore, at a very conservative estimate of 5 minutes to review and redact each piece of data in the *MO Description Text*, it would take approximately 36 hours to ascertain the data required for question 2.

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.

Please see the remaining response for Q1.

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.

- This data contains crimes recorded under the crime tree level two 'theft offences' with a created date between 1st January 2019 and 31st December 2023 where the Crime Description or Crime MO Description contain 'handbag', excluding cancelled crimes. Further information about cancelled crimes can be obtained from the Home Office Counting Rules.

Please note:

- The keyword methodology does not account for spelling errors.

Year	Counts of Crime
2019	2729
2020	1375
2021	1231
2022	1573
2023	1730