

2nd June 2021

Freedom of Information Request - Reference No: 20211170

REQUEST

This is a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. My request relates to public appeals of missing persons.

I would like to request the following information.

How many missing persons incidents resulted in a public appeal issued by the police force during the following periods:

- *April 1st, 2020 - March 31st, 2021*
- *April 1st, 2019 - March 31st, 2020*
- *April 1st, 2018 - March 31st, 2019*
- *April 1st, 2017 - March 31st, 2018*

Please provide the figures for each of these periods broken down by ethnicity of the missing person who is the subject of the appeal, eg White, Black, Asian, South East Asian, Chinese, Japanese, Middle Eastern, mixed race, other, unknown.

By the term 'public appeal', I mean any method of publicity employed by the force to ask members of the public to come forward with information or raise awareness, such as posters, online adverts, posts on social media, press releases, etc.

RESPONSE

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires South Yorkshire Police, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt), to provide you the applicant with a notice which:

- a.states that fact,
- b.specifies the exemption in question and
- c.states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

The following exemption applies to the disclosure of the information:

Section 12 – Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

Our Media Team have advised to retrieve the data to fit the criteria of your request would exceed the 18hr rule allowed by the FOI Act.

As a force we issue at least 3 missing persons appeals each week. Taking just the minimum number of 3 per day x 4 years gives in excess of 600 appeals which would need to be manually reviewed to check if ethnicity is recorded in the paperwork for each appeal. At a conservative 4 minutes per appeal this would greatly exceed the 18hrs.

For completeness I did also check with the Administrator of the Missing Persons system. This system records episodes of Missing Persons but does not have a “media appeal” flag or field which would denote if there was a media appeal. Therefore to retrieve the data to fit your request would again require a manual search of all records to see if there is anything recorded in the text.

In essence without a record level manual checks we cannot extract this level of data to fulfil your request without exceed the 18hr rule.

The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 provide that the cost limit for non-central government public authorities is £450. This must be calculated at the rate of £25 per hour, providing an effective time limit of 18 hours.

Guidance from the Information Commissioner to public authorities is that where one part of a request is reasonably estimated to exceed the appropriate limit then the authority is not obliged to consider or comply with the remainder of the request up to the point at which the appropriate limit has been reached. Please note point 30 of the below link:-

https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1199/costs_of_compliance_exceeds_appropriate_limit.pdf