

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 20 July 2018

Public Authority: Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service

Address: New Scotland Yard
Broadway
London
SW1H 0BG

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested figures for offences relating to indecent images of children.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that the Metropolitan Police Service (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 issue 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 Act and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

Request and response

5. On 2 May 2018, the complainant wrote to the MPS and requested information in the following terms:

1a) The total number of recorded offences for indecent images (still or moving) of children, for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017

1b) The total number of recorded offences for indecent images (still or moving) of children, for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

2a) The breakdown of possession, distribution and any other linked indecent image (still or moving) of children offence for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017

2b) The breakdown of possession, distribution and any other linked indecent image (still or moving) of children offence for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

2c) The breakdown of possession, distribution and any other linked indecent image (still or moving) of children offence for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, with the breakdown of perpetrators age (by individual age where possible), gender and occupation.

If the request exceeds the Freedom of Information time limit, please focus on 2a and 2b

3a) The breakdown of taking indecent images (still or moving) of children for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017

3b) The breakdown of taking indecent images (still or moving) of children for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

3c) The breakdown of taking indecent images (still or moving) of children for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 with the breakdown of perpetrators age (by individual age where possible), gender and occupation.

If the request exceeds the Freedom of Information time limit, please focus on 3a and 3b".

6. The MPS acknowledged the request on 8 May 2018, confirming that the request was received on 2 May 2018.
7. The complainant wrote to the MPS on 5 June 2018 to chase the response. The MPS responded on 6 June 2018 but did not confirm when they would provide their response.

Scope of the case

8. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 15 June 2018 to complain about the MPS's failure to respond to his information request.
9. On 25 June 2018 the Commissioner wrote to the MPS, reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant within 10 working days.
10. Despite this intervention the MPS has failed to respond to the complainant.

Reasons for decision

11. Section 1(1) of 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."

12. 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"*.
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@hmcts.gsi.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

**Deborah Clark
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SK9 5AF**