

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 31 May 2019

Public Authority: Chief Constable of Sussex Police

Address: Sussex Police Headquarters

Malling House

Lewes

Sussex

BN7 2DZ

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested various information regarding the Safeguarding Investigation Unit of Sussex Police.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that Sussex Police 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 Sussex Police to take the following step to ensure compliance with the legislation.
 - Sussex Police must issue a substantive response to the request in accordance with its obligations under the FOIA.
4. Sussex Police 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 6 February 2019, the complainant wrote to Sussex Police and requested information in the following terms:

"Please provide the following information on the Safeguarding Investigation Unit of Sussex Police.

1) Who has been in overall charge of this unit since it was formed in 2015?

2) When was this individual, or individuals, appointed?

3) Was this post advertised and selection made this way, or how was/were the person/people appointed?

4) What experience of safeguarding did the person/people have prior to holding the post?

5) To whom does the head of The Safeguarding investigation Unit report? Does anyone else have accountability for this unit?

6) Has the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner been involved with this unit in any way?

7) Provide copies of all communications between the head of this unit and his/her superior, or the Sussex Police and crime Commissioner, since the unit was set up in 2015.

8) What statistics has this unit been required to produce since its inception? Please provide copies of all of these with certain details redacted if necessary."

6. Sussex Police acknowledged the request on the same day. However, to date it has failed to provide a response to the request.

Scope of the case

7. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 18 April 2019 to complain about Sussex Police's failure to respond to his information request.
8. On 1 May 2019 the Commissioner wrote to Sussex Police, reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant within 10 working days.

9. Despite this intervention Sussex Police has failed to respond to the complainant.
10. The Commissioner has considered whether Sussex Police has complied with its obligations in relation to the time for compliance at section 10(1) of the FOIA.

Reasons for decision

11. 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."

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 Sussex Police did not deal with the request for information in accordance with the FOIA. The Commissioner finds that Sussex Police 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

**Ben Tomes
Team Manager
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF**