

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 14 June 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 statistics regarding information requests received from the media and the general public.
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 28 March 2019, the complainant wrote to Sussex Police by email and requested information in the following terms:

"Can you please let me know for the last year (absolute or 2018 - use the easiest) the quantity of FOI requests and how many were from the media and how many from the General Public.

For each of these two categories can you let me know the percentage responded to within the statutory time limit and further the percentage responded to with a substantial response (as opposed to a too expensive or no information response)

eg

for 2018

Number of media requests : x. Percentage of those responded to in time y. percentage of those with substantial response z.

Number of General public requests : a. Percentage of those responded to in time b. percentage of those with substantial response c."

6. The complainant received a read receipt later that day, 28 March 2019. However, to the date of this notice Sussex Police has failed to provide a response to the request.

Scope of the case

7. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 30 April 2019 to complain about Sussex Police's failure to respond to his information request.
8. On 15 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 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