



**SUFFOLK  
CONSTABULARY**  
*Taking pride in keeping Suffolk safe*

## **Freedom of Information Request Reference N°: FOI 004611-19**

I write in connection with your request for information received by Suffolk Constabulary on the 23 December 2019 in which you sought access to the following information:

1. *“How many cases of alleged social media harassment were reported to your police force*
2. *Of the cases of alleged social media harassment which were reported to your police force, how many lead to charges being brought*
3. *Of the cases of alleged social media harassment which were reported to your police force, how many of the complainants were male*
4. *Of the cases of alleged social media harassment which were reported to your police force, how many of the complainants were female*
5. *Of the cases of alleged social media harassment which were reported to your police force, how many of the alleged perpetrators were male*
6. *Of the cases of alleged social media harassment which were reported to police force, how many of the alleged perpetrators were female*
7. *On how many occasions did your police force issue harassment warning notices*

### Time frame:

- (a) *1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019*
- (b) *1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018*
- (c) *1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017*
- (d) *1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016*
- (e) *1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015”*

## **Response to your Request**

The response provided below is correct as of 6 January 2020

Suffolk Constabulary has considered your request for information and the response is below.

Information held prior to 19 October 2015 is held within a legacy crime system and the way offences were previously recorded with regards to online offences, has changed. There is no



online crime flag on the previous crime system and consequently, in order to extract social media related harassment offences during the time frame 1 April 2014 to 19 October 2015, would be to manually review all harassment offences recorded.

There are many hundreds of harassment offences recorded in any one month and it would take well in excess of 18 hours to extract the data to answer the request for the time frame specified.

In relation to your request for information and in accordance with Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), this response serves as a formal notification of refusal for your request. Suffolk Constabulary does not hold, for the purposes of FOIA, the information you require in a retrievable format.

It is estimated that to attempt to retrieve all of the information you require would take a considerable amount of retrieval time, which would exceed 18 hours. This would exceed the appropriate limit for dealing with Freedom of Information requests, in terms of costs and therefore Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 applies.

Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 states that a Public Authority is not obliged to: *"...comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit."* The Freedom of Information (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations, defines the 'appropriate limit' for the Suffolk Constabulary as £450 and specifies that this sum equates to 18 hours work at a standard rate of £25 per hour.

In accordance with Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter serves as a refusal notice for this part of your request.

By requesting *all* information your request is too broad to be complied with within the £450 limit imposed on Freedom of Information requests.

Although excess cost removes the Force's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, as a gesture of goodwill, I have supplied information, relative to your request, retrieved or available before it was realised that the fees limit would be exceeded. I trust this is helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request.

The information provided relates to the time frame 1 October 2015 – 31 March 2019.

1. The total number of social media harassment allegations made to the Constabulary is as follows:



Offence	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Assault without Injury - Common assault and battery	1			2	
Attempted - Breach of a restraining order		1			
Attempted - Harassment - Pursue course of conduct in breach of Sec 1 (1) which amounts to stalking			1	1	
Attempted - Harassment - without violence (course of conduct)	1	1	1	1	
Attempted - Sending letters etc with intent to cause distress or anxiety, Malicious Communications Act 1988	3	1	1	1	
Breach of a restraining order	50	200	219	156	40
Breach of conditions of injunction against harassment	2	10	6	13	1
Disclose private sexual photographs and films with intent to cause distress	7	27	41	30	7
Engage in controlling/coercive behaviour in an intimate / family relationship.		1		1	
Harassment - Pursue course of conduct in breach of Sec 1 (1) which amounts to stalking	4	40	181	145	28
Harassment - Putting people in fear of violence	14	55	39	92	34
Harassment - without violence (course of conduct)	200	1175	1408	2258	743
Harassment etc. of a person in his home	2	1	4	25	4
Racially or religiously aggravated Harassment or stalking without violence		1			
Sending letters etc with intent to cause distress or anxiety, Malicious Communications Act 1988	192	1538	1131	417	167
Stalking involving fear of violence		19	18	26	
Stalking involving serious alarm/distress	7	48	49	80	13
Threats to kill				1	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>3118</b>	<b>3099</b>	<b>3249</b>	<b>1037</b>

2. The total number of persons charged is provided below, noting that some of the offences will still be under investigation and there are other available positive outcomes.

Offence	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Assault without Injury - Common assault and battery	1				
Attempted - Breach of a restraining order		1			
Attempted - Harassment - without violence (course of conduct)		1			
Attempted - Sending letters etc with intent to cause distress or anxiety, Malicious Communications Act 1988			1		
Breach of a restraining order	31	123	118	88	24
Breach of conditions of injunction against harassment	1	7	2	6	1
Disclose private sexual photographs and films with intent to cause distress		8	6		1



Engage in controlling/coercive behaviour in an intimate / family relationship.				1	
Harassment - Pursue course of conduct in breach of Sec 1 (1) which amounts to stalking	2	7	17	17	3
Harassment - Putting people in fear of violence	1	5	8	13	4
Harassment - without violence (course of conduct)	25	83	66	73	21
Harassment etc. of a person in his home					1
Sending letters etc with intent to cause distress or anxiety, Malicious Communications Act 1988	11	50	20	10	1
Stalking involving fear of violence		8	6	7	
Stalking involving serious alarm/distress	1	8	8	19	2
Threats to kill				1	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>58</b>

3. The gender of the complainants is as follows:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Not Recorded</b>	<b>Not Stated</b>	<b>Unspecified</b>
2015	51	20	1	1	
2016	423	173	8	14	
2017	335	150	18	404	
2018	206	100	9	457	2
2019	117	46		177	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1132</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1053</b>	<b>2</b>

4. As above

5. The gender of the suspects is as follows:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Not Recorded</b>	<b>Not Stated</b>
2015	20	51	1	1
2016	199	332	11	76
2017	169	260	12	466
2018	112	154	6	502
2019	67	70	2	201
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1246</b>

6. As above

7. The number of harassment warning notices issued is as follows:



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Year	Harassment Warning Notice
2015	3
2016	6
2017	7
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>16</b>

***Police forces in the United Kingdom are routinely required to provide crime statistics to government bodies and the recording criteria is set nationally. However, the systems used for recording these figures are not generic, nor are the procedures used locally in capturing the crime data. It should be noted that for these reasons this force's response to your questions should not be used for comparison purposes with any other response you may receive.***

Should you have any further queries concerning this request, please contact Clair Pack, FOI Decision Maker, quoting the reference number shown above.

A full copy of the Freedom of Information Act (2000) can be viewed on the 'Office of Public Sector Information' web-site;  
<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/>

Suffolk Constabulary is not responsible for the content, or the reliability, of the website referenced. The Constabulary cannot guarantee that this link will work all of the time, and we have no control over the availability of the linked pages.



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Your Right to Request a Review of Decisions Made Under the Terms of the  
Freedom of Information Act (2000).

If you are unhappy with how your request has been handled, or if you think the decision is incorrect, you have the right to ask Suffolk Constabulary to review their decision.

Ask Suffolk Constabulary to look at the decision again.

If you are dissatisfied with the decision made by Suffolk Constabulary under the Freedom of Information Act (2000), regarding access to information, you must notify Suffolk Constabulary that you are requesting a review within 40 working days of the date of its response to your Freedom of Information request. Requests for a review should be made in writing and addressed to:

*Freedom of Information Decision Maker  
Information Management Department  
Suffolk Constabulary  
Police Headquarters  
Martlesham Heath  
Ipswich  
Suffolk  
IP5 3QS  
OR  
Email: [information@suffolk.pnn.police.uk](mailto:information@suffolk.pnn.police.uk)*

In all possible circumstances Suffolk Constabulary will aim to respond to your request for us to look at our decision again within 20 working days of receipt of your request for an internal review.

The Information Commissioner.

After lodging a request for a review with Suffolk Constabulary, if you are still dissatisfied with the decision, you can apply to the Information Commissioner for a decision on whether the request for information has been dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

For information on how to make application to the Information Commissioner please visit their website at [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk) or contact them at the address shown below:

The Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF  
Telephone: 01625 545 700