

FOI/OPCC/18-021

20th August 2018

Dear Member of the Public

I am writing in response to your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, dated 26 July 2018.

You requested the following information:

What estimates or analysis does the OPCC hold relating or referring to the impact of “county lines” drug supply operations in your force area? Please provide copies of any such estimates/analysis or a summary of the key statistics and findings.

Please advise me on what other information your OPCC force holds relating or referring to “county lines” drugs supply operations.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (OPCC) can neither confirm nor deny whether it holds the information requested.

The specific exemptions within the Freedom of Information Act used in arriving at this decision are as follows:

S23(5), Information supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters

The full wording of this subsection of the Act is: The duty to confirm or deny does not arise if, or to the extent that, compliance with section 1(1)(a) would involve the disclosure of any information (whether or not already recorded) which was directly or indirectly supplied to the public authority by, or relates to, any of the bodies specified in subsection (3).

This is an absolute exemption.

I have also applied s31 (3) Law enforcement and s24 (2) National security exemptions, both of which require a justification for their applicability.

To confirm or deny whether information is or is not held regarding county lines at an OPCC level would not only undermine ongoing investigations, but also the National Security.

There is a public interest in transparency of policing allowing assurances to be provided that the Police Service is appropriately engaging with criminal and national security threats and the public are entitled to know how public funds are spent regarding policing and national security. However, this should be balanced against the need to protect vulnerable areas, and ongoing policing operational activity. Other organisations outside the Police Service may, or may not have an active interest in the subject of the question above. By confirming or denying that any information exists relevant to the request could harm the close relationship that exists between the forces and other organisations.

To confirm or deny whether the OPCC hold any information relevant to the request would allow inferences to be made about the nature and extent of criminal and national security related activities which may or may not take place in a given area.

Confirming or denying whether any information is held relevant to the request would show where policing interest has or has not occurred in any specific area which would enable those engaged in criminal activity to identify the focus of policing targets and identify vulnerable parts of the UK. This would enable criminal groups to take steps to counter intelligence, and as such, confirmation or denial would be damaging to national security and the prevention or detection of crime and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

Vulnerable areas could be detected by OPCC level disclosure leading to more criminal activity placing members of the public in harms way. If information is released confirming or denying that requests have been made this may impact police resources as vulnerable forces may need to increase their resources to reassure the public and protect the surrounding community.

In order to assist your research, I have included a link, below, to a report published by the National Crime Agency concerning County Lines which gives a national overview which I hope will be of assistance to you.

<http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/832-county-lines-violence-exploitation-and-drug-supply-2017/file>

I trust that the information provided above meets your needs. However, if you are unhappy with this response, please see below 'satisfied with our service', which sets out your rights to appeal.

Kind regards

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough