

18 January 2024

Case reference: IC-278363-B3Y9

We are now in a position to respond to your information request of 31 December 2023.

Request

"Stores within retail parks or High streets often have Whatsapp groups so that stores can alert each other to shoplifters moving from store to store or when a suspect has made off from a store having shoplifted.

They are also useful to prevent anti social behaviour and a safety tool to advise of potentially violent suspects.

Please provide any information concerning data sharing agreements and advice provided to those seeking to set up similar groups."

We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). FOIA provides individuals with the right of access to recorded information held by a public authority.

Our response

Please be aware that we provide an advice service to the public via our helpline 0303 123 1113 and live chat function on our website [here](#). Enquiries made through these routes would be better placed to answer your questions in relation to this topic area. We do not provide this service via the WhatDoTheyKnow.com website.

In terms of the recorded information you have requested under FOIA, we have considered the cost of complying with your information request and can confirm that it exceeds the 'appropriate limit' as set out in section 12 of the FOIA.

Section 12 of the FOIA makes clear that a public authority is not obliged to comply with an FOIA request if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the 'appropriate limit'. The 'appropriate limit' for the ICO, as determined in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 is £450. We have determined that £450 would equate to 18 hours work.

You have asked for the advice we have provided to individuals who may have approached us about setting up these types of groups. Whilst the information you have requested is most likely to sit within our casework management system, this system is not set up to easily provide us with the type of information you have requested.

The only way we could identify the information you have requested would be to manually review the details we hold contained within a subset of cases, based on searchable parameters available on our casework system.

As mentioned previously, we provide an advice service to the public. Our telephone calls are not recorded but in terms of written advice requests we hold 535 cases for 2022/23 and 473 cases for 2023/24, financial years (total 1,105). This subset of 1,105 advice cases is for enquiries brought to us recorded under the sector of 'Retail and manufacture', which is the closest match to your topic area. Our casework records are held for 2 years in line with our retention policy.

We would estimate that it would take a minimum of 2 minutes per case to manually check the records held on these 1,105 cases. The time it would take to carry out searches on these records would be over 36 hours, which is well in excess of the section 12 FOIA cost limit.

Advice and assistance

You could consider narrowing the scope of your request to bring it within the cost limit, such as a search for a specific time period.

Advice cases do have a short summary title which includes information about the content of the enquiry. Preliminary searches using key words contained in these titles did not return any matches for the scenario you have described.

It may help to explain that the guidance we produce is typically general in nature or for specific circumstances that are common or pertinent to significant sections of the public. We do not produce guidance for every potential set of circumstances under the legislation we oversee.

Below are a number of links from our website that may be useful in your area of interest. You may also wish to refer to the relevant retail store (data controller) with regards to their privacy notice and policies on the handling of personal information by employees.

[GDPR guidance and resources](#)

[Guidance for the public](#)

[CCTV and video surveillance](#)

[Advice for small businesses](#)

[Data sharing](#)

[ICO's social media policy for staff](#)

This concludes our response to your request. We hope you found the above information helpful.

Next steps

You can ask us to review our response. Please let us know in writing if you want us to carry out a review. Please do so within 40 working days. You can read a copy of our full review procedure [here](#).

If we perform a review but you are still dissatisfied, you can complain to the ICO as regulator of the FOIA. This complaint will be handled just like a complaint made to the ICO about any other public authority. You can [raise a complaint through our website](#).

Your information

Our [privacy notice](#) explains what we do with the personal data you provide to us, and sets out [your rights](#). Our [Retention and Disposal Policy](#) details how long we keep information.

Yours sincerely



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**For information about what we do with personal data
see our [privacy notice](#)**