

1 February 2022

IR-01-21- 34171

Fredrick Fong
fyi-request-17612-7742874c@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Fredrick,

Request for information

Thank you for your request dated 17 November 2021 seeking information under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) relating to the impact of COVID-19 on investigations.

You requested:

I am writing to request information on how many active investigations are currently on hold, not being investigated (i.e. Interviews with witnesses, victims, or offenders) due to COVID-19 lockdowns in New Zealand.

I am also requesting a break down of these by area (i.e. City or post code) and by allegation (i.e. Abuse, theft, etc).

I would also like to know how many of these cases involve a child's potential safety.

Is there a document that outlines whether a case is deemed high-risk enough to investigate under higher alert levels?

Is there any communication or suggestion from parliament to the police on how to investigate under higher alert levels (i.e. Zoom interviews, outdoor socially distanced interviews.)

The first part of your request regarding active investigations, by area, that are “on hold” or “not being investigated due to COVID-19 lockdowns in New Zealand,” – although there were some delays with investigative enquiries during lockdowns at Alert Levels 3 and 4 during 2021, including in relation to the scheduling of interviews, Police does not record or use an investigative status or other indicator of “on hold” that might automatically identify where such delays occurred. The only way to establish whether such delays occurred in any particular case would be to review cases manually, and as such, these parts of your request are refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information cannot be obtained without substantial collation and research.

You also asked whether any cases that were “on hold” might involve a child’s potential safety. For Child Protection investigations, Police will respond to any event, incident or

allegation where a child is potentially at risk, regardless of the COVID-19 settings, and undertake activities required to ensure risks to a child's safety are mitigated.

Lastly, you requested copies of documents about "whether a case is deemed high-risk enough to investigate" at higher COVID-19 alert levels, and any communications from government to Police about how to progress investigative activities (such as interviews) in these contexts. We have attempted to locate such documents, including by searching the Police Intranet, and could find no documents that addressed these issues specifically. Triage, prioritisation and risk assessment are a normal part of criminal investigations, and Police Districts have applied them in relation to COVID-19 as part of 'business as usual'. This part of request is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA because the requested document[s] do not exist.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Yours sincerely,



Kathryn Wilson
Manager: Strategy & Capability
National Criminal Investigations Group