



# Ministry of Defence Police

Freedom of Information Manager

Ministry of Defence Police

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Our Ref: eCase: FOI 2023/06329

RFI: 139/23

Date: 20 June 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000: MINISTRY OF DEFENCE POLICE:  
EARWITNESS PROTOCOLS.**

We refer to your email dated 20<sup>th</sup> May 2023 to the Ministry of Defence Police which was acknowledged on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2023 by The Ministry of Defence Police.

We are treating your email as a request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA 2000).

In your email you requested the following information:

**Please see below my FOI request, I would appreciate your help with this.**

**I am currently carrying out a research project in Forensic Speech Science at The University of York. I would like to request any information you may have regarding earwitness testimony protocols within your police force.**

**An earwitness testimony refers to a statement or account provided by an individual who claims to have heard or overheard a particular event or conversation. It is like an eyewitness testimony but specifically focuses on what someone heard rather than what they saw. Earwitness testimonies can be crucial in legal proceedings, such as criminal investigations or trials, where they may provide important information or evidence regarding an incident, or the identification of individuals involved. However, like eyewitness testimonies, earwitness testimonies can be subject to limitations, biases, and inaccuracies, and their reliability may vary depending on various factors such as the conditions of the event, the memory and perception abilities of the witness, the way in which the information is collected by a police officer and other contextual factors.**

**The research I am carrying out will hopefully clarify what protocols (if any) are currently being used in the UK for earwitness testimonies. This will help me to establish whether there is a need to develop an earwitness 'tool' which could**

potentially be a more accurate way of documenting this information. The first step we are currently in the process of developing is a pitch slider, then we hope to add further vocal characteristics. The aim is to make this tool as accurate as possible, and as user-friendly and efficient as possible for police officers and lay-people to use.

Therefore, I would like you to answer the following questions and please provide as much detail as possible. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

- 1) Does the police force have any in-house or nationwide protocols at present for eliciting earwitness testimonies? If yes, what document, guidelines or tools are used?
- 2) What training is in place for how police officers conduct an initial account from a victim/witness when taking an earwitness testimony?
- 3) How many cases in the past year have involved earwitness evidence?

A search for information has now been completed I can confirm that the Ministry of Defence Police do hold information in scope of your request.

- 1) Does the police force have any in-house or nationwide protocols at present for eliciting earwitness testimonies? If yes, what document, guidelines or tools are used?

No

- 2) What training is in place for how police officers conduct an initial account from a victim/witness when taking an earwitness testimony?

When we deliver Investigating training this would encompass an "Earwitness" i.e. a witness that has heard something not seen something – e.g. a witness possibly hearing a Domestic Violence ongoing in the property next door but never seeing it.

MDP Training material does not break down the difference in "Eyewitness/ Earwitness" per se. A statement would normally be taken in the same way just making reference to that they haven't seen the incident only heard it. We also teach the mnemonic – PLAT which captures actions including verbal.

#### PEOPLE

Victim  
Suspect  
Witnesses

#### LOCATION

Scene of incident  
Other locations

#### ACTIONS

Physical  
Verbal

#### TIME

Prior to incident  
During incident  
After incident

**3) How many cases in the past year have involved earwitness evidence?**

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If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk).

Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

**MDP Secretariat and Freedom of Information Office**