

19 August 2024

FOI Ref 16525

Request - You asked us the following:

1. How many officers on the force are currently hostage and crisis negotiator trained?
2. What is the type of training that is undertaken for this?
3. How many days does training take?
4. Who provides the training?
5. How many officers undertook hostage and negotiator training in the individual years between 2017 - 2023?

I'm happy to give a deadline of the 4th of March for this information.

We received your request on 15/02/2024 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Please find below our response.

Staffordshire Police holds the following requested information.

1. How many officers on the force are currently hostage and crisis negotiator trained? – **Information held.**
2. What is the type of training that is undertaken for this? – **Information held.**
3. How many days does training take? – **Information held.**
4. Who provides the training? – **Information held.**
5. How many officers undertook hostage and negotiator training in the individual years between 2017 - 2023? – **Information held.**

Staffordshire Police discloses/withholds the following information.

1. How many officers on the force are currently hostage and crisis negotiator trained? – **Withheld.**
2. What is the type of training that is undertaken for this? – **Disclosed - National Accredited Course.**
3. How many days does training take? – **Disclosed – 10 days**
4. Who provides the training? – **Withheld. – This is exempt under Section 31(1) – Law Enforcement.**

5. How many officers undertook hostage and negotiator training in the individual years between 2017 - 2023? – **Disclosed – Please see below:**

2017 – 3
2018 – 0
2019 – 2
2020 – 0
2021 – 4
2022 – 0
2023 - 3

The above information has been withheld for the following reasons:

The FOI Act is ‘applicant blind’. This means that we cannot, and do not, ask about the motives of anyone who asks for information. In providing a response to one person, we are expressing a willingness to provide the same response to anyone, including those who might represent a threat to the UK.

Where disclosure will likely jeopardise the primary functions of Staffordshire Police, namely to prevent and detect crime as well as apprehend and prosecute offenders, information needs to be protected.

In view of those functions the tactical role of Negotiators is to deal with incidents and negotiate with subjects to resolve operations in line with the incident commander’s strategy. By doing so they provide stability and support to those in command of such incidents. Therefore, providing the number of trained Negotiators within Staffordshire Police, along with other forces, would aid criminals to identify in which force areas the level of such a resource might be deemed as weaker, and use this knowledge to their advantage in furthering criminal activity around the force area and country as a whole.

In addition, naming the forces that deliver Negotiator training would provide enough information for individuals (or groups of individuals) with criminal or malicious intent to locate, reconnoitre and directly target relevant training facilities. This would include disrupting the ability to provide such training safely and efficiently. Ultimately, this would provide criminals a tactical advantage over the police, which could then be used to hinder our ability to fulfil basic law enforcement functions.

The disclosure of information which is likely to undermine the Police service’s ability to serve the public by providing the primary functions stated, can only be considered as being harmful to the public.

The following exemptions have been applied:

- Section 31 (1) (a) (b) - Law Enforcement.

Information is exempt from disclosure under S31 (1) (a) (b) where the release of Information would, or would likely to, prejudice the prevention and detection of crime and/ or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders. This exemption is qualified and prejudice-based and, as such, we are required to evidence the harm in disclosure and apply the public interest test.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure for Section 31

Disclosure would allow for greater public awareness and openness over Staffordshire Police resource capability to deal with Crisis negotiation situations. As a result, the public would become more informed on how and where public funds are being spent in this area of policing and gain a greater knowledge of the resources available to prevent and detect crime. In itself that can lead to a reduction of crime and give the public more confidence in reporting incidents of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

Factors favouring non-disclosure for Section 31

Disclosing the requested information would have a detrimental impact upon operational policing. Disclosing the number of trained Negotiators within Staffordshire Police, along with information relevant to their training, would provide those individuals or groups within the criminal fraternity a significant operational advantage as the information could be used with a view to disrupting training, or develop tactics that would divert resources away from locations that they wish to target. This would clearly jeopardise the ability of Staffordshire Police to respond appropriately to criminal activity and thereby protect the public.

The requested information could be used to compromise law enforcement capabilities by decreasing the ability of the police to fight crime, which would increase the commission of crime and subsequently have a detrimental impact on public safety as well as decrease public confidence in the police force.

Balancing Test

After weighing up the competing interests I have determined that the disclosure of the requested information would not be in the public interest. I consider that the benefit that would result from the information being disclosed does not outweigh the considerations favouring non-disclosure. I find that the strongest reasons favouring disclosure are to provide greater public awareness and openness in how public funding is being spent, and whether Staffordshire Police is suitably resourced to deal with crisis negotiation situations.

However, the strongest and most decisive reasons against disclosure are the impact that disclosure would have on public safety, and the prevention of the malicious redirecting of Staffordshire Police resources.

Clearly the release of any information that is likely to assist the criminal network and impact on our operational and tactical capabilities cannot be in the public interest and whilst wishing to embrace the ethos of information disclosure, this cannot take precedence over public safety

Next steps

You can ask us to review our response.

If you would like us to carry out a review of our response, please let us know within two months of the date of receipt of this email, review requests should be addressed to:



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

foi@staffordshire.police.uk

Or by Post to:

Central Disclosure Unit
Staffordshire Police HQ
PO Box 3167
Stafford
ST16 9JZ

Please remember to quote the reference number in any future communications.

Freedom of Information
Central Disclosure Unit