

15 October 2024

FOI Ref 17208

Request - You asked us the following:

I am emailing regarding some responses to my FOI requests for a research study I am conducting, and I would be very grateful for your police service input.

Please find my questions below for consideration and should you have any further questions, feel free to let me know.

1. Please provide the current number and percentage of women in intelligence leadership roles within your police service intelligence operation units. For example, analysts, intelligence managers, senior intelligence managers and other supervisory roles.
2. What efforts are being made to ensure gender diversity in these positions within the services intelligence unit?
3. What specific programs/initiatives or policies does your police service have in place to promote gender diversity and support women in advancing to leadership roles, specifically within the intelligence units?
4. Those in intelligence roles such as covert/overt surveillance operations, undercover operations officer, field intelligence officers etc- what is the current number and percentage of women in these roles?
5. Over the past 5 years how has the number and percentage of women in intelligence leadership roles within your police service changed?

We received your request on 30/08/2024 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Staffordshire Police's response to your enquiry is as follows:

Staffordshire Police holds/does not hold the requested information.

1. Please provide the current number and percentage of women in intelligence leadership roles within your police service intelligence operation units. For example, analysts, intelligence managers, senior intelligence managers and other supervisory roles. – **Disclosed, 70% of all intelligence roles are women.**
2. What efforts are being made to ensure gender diversity in these positions within the services intelligence unit? – **Unknown*.**

3. What specific programs/initiatives or policies does your police service have in place to promote gender diversity and support women in advancing to leadership roles, specifically within the intelligence units? – **Unknown***.
4. Those in intelligence roles such as covert/overt surveillance operations, undercover operations officer, field intelligence officers etc- what is the current number and percentage of women in these roles? – **Staffordshire Police can neither confirm nor deny information is held regarding the number or percentage of women in covert or undercover operations. Further information is unknown***.
5. Over the past 5 years how has the number and percentage of women in intelligence leadership roles within your police service changed? – **Unknown***.

The following exemptions have been applied:

In accordance with Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, this letter represents a refusal notice for parts of this particular request.

- Section 24(2) – National Security

Section 24 is a qualified exemption and as such there is a requirement to articulate the harm and conduct a test of the public interest.

- Section 31(3) - Law Enforcement.

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Harm

Undercover police tactics are, by their very nature, sensitive. They include techniques and controls that will be of great interest to criminals who are trying to develop measures to counter them. This includes identifying and mapping the deployment of undercover officers (UCOs) with the intention of establishing how and when UCOs have been deployed and/or may be deployed in future.

To confirm or deny whether Staffordshire Police, or other police forces utilise UCOs and how many would undermine the purpose of undercover operations. By providing the information requested (if held), it would allow comparison between forces across the country and enable the criminal fraternity to build a picture of what resources are in place. Consequently, this would prejudice the effectiveness of the police service as it would allow inferences to be drawn about force level capability and would identify vulnerability around the country.

The Police Service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. The confirmation or denial of the information sought would impact on the effectiveness of police procedures and investigations thereby hindering the prevention and detection of crime.

Public interest Test

Factors favouring confirming or denying information is held under Section 24

The information simply relates to women in covert roles and their percentage. To confirm whether information exists would enable the general public to understand more about equality and the balance on genders within policing.

Factors against confirming or denying information is held under Section 24

No information which may aid criminals or those who present any other threats to national security, such as through terrorism, should be disclosed. To what extent confirmation or denial may aid such a fraternity is unknown, but it is clear that it will have an impact on a force's ability to safeguard national security interests.

The public entrust the Police Service to make appropriate decisions with regard to their safety and protection. The only way of reducing risk is to be cautious with what is placed into the public domain and in some circumstances such as these, confirmation or denial that information is held.

The cumulative effect of criminals gathering information from various sources would build a picture of vulnerabilities within certain scenarios, such as whether or not UCOs are located within a specific policing areas. The more information disclosed over time will provide a more detailed account of the tactical infrastructure of not only a force area but also the country as a whole.

Any incident which results from such a disclosure would by default affect National Security.

Factors favouring confirming or denying information is held under Section 31

Confirming or denying whether Staffordshire Police holds information relevant to this request the public would be able to see the proactive ways that the police are continually recruiting to equal opportunity roles within policing. Staffordshire Police is committed to openness and transparency with the general public. When a request for information is made to them, it is correct that the police make appropriate information available to the general public.

Factors against confirming or denying information is held under Section 31

Staffordshire Police has a duty of care to the community at large and public safety is of paramount importance. If an FOI disclosure reveals information to the world, by not adopting an NCND position, it would not only compromise and undermine the security of the national infrastructure, but the effective delivery of operational law enforcement would also be undermined as offenders could use this knowledge to their advantage which would compromise public safety and more worryingly encourage offenders to carry out further crimes.

Staffordshire Police has a statutory role in investigating criminal offences. Staffordshire Police will not disclose, through the duty to confirm or deny whether information is held under the Act, whether or not UCOs are used, and by extension, have been deployed. This information would allow criminals to map forces that might be using UCOs and assist them to predict where current UCOs are deployed and/or where UCOs may be deployed in future. This information could also, in certain circumstances, compromise police investigations, tactics and/or sources of information. Where compromise occurs, this would adversely affect Staffordshire Police's ability to prevent and detect crime and apprehend and prosecute offenders. This would be contrary to the public interest.

Balance Test

After weighing up the competing interests we have determined that the confirmation or denial that information is held would not be in the public interest.



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

The security of the country is of paramount importance and Staffordshire Police will not divulge whether information is or is not held if to do so could undermine National Security or compromise Law Enforcement. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations and in this case providing assurance that the police service is appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat posed by the criminal fraternity through the use of UCOs, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding both National Security and the integrity of police investigations and operations in this area.

Advice and assistance

Section 16 of the Act places an obligation upon the Authority to provide advice and assistance, in order to comply with this obligation please see below.

*We have made numerous exhaustive attempts to obtain the data you have requested from the relevant data holders within the force. However, following all attempts, we have been unable to receive a satisfactory response from the data holders with which to provide a response to your request. If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your information request, you can make an appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The easiest way to lodge your appeal is via their website: www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints

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:

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