

20 November 2024

FOI Ref 17482

Request - You asked us the following:

a. How many complaints or reports have your force had regarding dogs being stolen in your area between the following years 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, January 2024-30 September 2024?

1b. Please breakdown the figures into the respective years.

1c. Please breakdown the breed of dog in the respective years.

2. In each year, please provide the number of missing dog cases the police investigated.

3. In each year, please provide the number of missing dogs officers found because of their investigations.

4. In each year, what was the average time officers spent investigating a missing dog case? I understand that officers may not keep logs, but I would accept an estimate if at all possible.

5. In each year, how many suspects did officers arrest for stealing a dog? Please give details of the charge. I know the Pet Abduction Act became law in 2024, but what would suspects have been charged with prior to this act?

6. Have your officers discussed the possibility of organised criminal gangs stealing dogs to order? If so, please provide any internal documents or briefing notes.

We received your request on 18/11/2024 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

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

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

The following exemption has been applied:

- Section 12(1) where the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit. Section 12(1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the prescribed limit'.

The above information has been withheld for the following reasons:

There is no method by which we can easily retrieve information from our systems to answer question 1 and 4 of this request. For the time period requested, there have been in excess of 12,750 occurrences. In order to ascertain whether a dog was stolen and the breed would require manual review. Furthermore, to provide data relating to the average time officers spent investigating missing dog cases would mean contacting every officer to determine, how long they have spent on dog investigations. To extract this data would therefore require a very labour-intensive manual trawl through each record.

From dip sampling, it has been estimated question 1 to take approximately 4 minutes to review each record to answer this request, this would equate to over 850 hours. To achieve this task would therefore exceed the 18-hour time and cost threshold of the FOI Act by some considerable margin

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.

Unfortunately, we cannot suggest a way in which your request could be simplified or pared down in order to bring it within the confines of the time and cost threshold.

However, outside of the Act I have provided you with the following information:

In regards to question 5, prior to the 'Pet Abduction Act 2024' this would have been recorded as theft or as admin dependent on the circumstance. Furthermore, questions 2, 3 and 6 are 'no information held'.

Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from Staffordshire Police, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.

2. How to Request a Review

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing within two months of the date of receipt of this email, and should be addressed to:

foi@staffordshire.police.uk

Or by Post to:

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

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Central Disclosure Unit within two months of the Force's response to the original FOI request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing. The review will be conducted by another Decision Maker who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Central Disclosure Unit will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to

complete the review within 20 working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 working days.

The independent Decision Maker will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, taking into account the matters raised by the complaint.

4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Decision maker will reply to the complainant with the result of the review. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the review they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following details:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

ICO Website for complaints link: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/foi-and-eir-complaints/foi-and-eir-complaints/>

Freedom of Information
Central Disclosure Unit