

2 October 2024

FOI Ref 17214

**Request - You asked us the following:**

I seek information on suicides and suspected suicides.

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS):

"The designation 'suspected suicide' is provided by the police and the term is used because the cause of death has not yet been confirmed by coroner inquest. When 'sudden and unexpected' death occurs, the suspected cause of death is allocated by the attending police officer. There is then a review, based on guidance from the NPCC, before a death is reported as a 'suspected suicide'."

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/near-to-real-time-suspected-suicide-surveillance-nrtsss-for-england/statistical-report-near-to-real-time-suspected-suicide-surveillance-nrtsss-for-england-for-the-15-months-to-august-2023>

1. For the year financial year 2023/24, please provide the number of deaths you reported as 'suspected suicide'.
2. Please provide the number of reviews you carried out during the same period of decisions taken by attending officers to designate deaths as 'suspected suicide'.

We received your request on 02/09/2024 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Please find below our response.

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

**Staffordshire Police withholds the following information.**

1. For the year financial year 2023/24, please provide the number of deaths you reported as 'suspected suicide'. – **Withheld.**
2. Please provide the number of reviews you carried out during the same period of decisions taken by attending officers to designate deaths as 'suspected suicide'. – **Withheld.**

**The above information has been withheld for the following reasons:**

There is no method by which we can readily retrieve information from our systems to answer this request. For the time period requested, there have been 2,077 reports of a death recorded on our incident reporting systems. There is no mandatory field to record whether the officer suspects suicide, therefore, in order to

ascertain whether the death may or may not have been a suspected suicide, the record for each incident would require manual review.

From dip sampling, it has been estimated that it would take approximately 5 minutes to review each record to answer this request, this would equate to over 173 hours. To achieve this task would therefore exceed the 18-hour time and cost threshold of the Freedom of Information Act by some considerable margin.

**The following exemptions have 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'.

**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.

**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](mailto: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