

9 December 2025

FOI Ref 22105

Request - You asked us the following:

I accept that Section 30(1)(a)(b) applies to the operational investigative materials I originally requested. However, the refusal did not address whether Staffordshire Police holds or can disclose materials that do not form part of the active investigative record, specifically:

- The original public press statements or press releases issued by Staffordshire Police in 1971 and any later appeals.
- The publicly circulated physical description and identifying features of the victim as recorded in formal public communications.
- Any missing persons bulletins, comparison lists, or circulated notices that were already released into the public domain at the time.
- The date on which the case was last subject to formal review (not the review contents, only the date).

We received your request on 12/11/2025 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

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

Staffordshire Police holds the requested information.

- The original public press statements or press releases issued by Staffordshire Police in 1971 and any later appeals. – **Partially disclosed, please see the accompanying file titled 'FOI 22105 Cold Case Investigation Data.PDF'.**
- The publicly circulated physical description and identifying features of the victim as recorded in formal public communications. – **Partially disclosed, please see the accompanying file titled 'FOI 22105 Cold Case Investigation Data.PDF'.**
- Any missing persons bulletins, comparison lists, or circulated notices that were already released into the public domain at the time. – **Withheld.**
- The date on which the case was last subject to formal review (not the review contents, only the date). – **Disclosed, the latest date we have recorded is 12/06/2013, however as this remains an ongoing investigation, it is constantly under review.**

The following exemption has 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 21(1) - Information reasonably accessible by other means.

Section 21 is an absolute, class-based exemption and as such there is no requirement to quantify the harm that may arise from the disclosure, nor is there a requirement to perform a Public Interest Test.

- Section 38 (1) (a) (b) – Health and Safety

Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to (a) endanger the physical or mental health of any individual, or (b) endanger the safety of any individual. 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.

- Section 40(2) Personal Information

Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption which means that there is no need to quantify the harm that may arise from the disclosure; neither is it subject to a public interest test.

To release personal or third-party information held by Staffordshire Police, would breach the data protection principles; namely –

- Data is lawfully and fairly processed.
- Processed in line with an individual's rights.
- Data is secure.

Personal and third-party information cannot be released under the Freedom of Information Act.

Disclosure under Freedom of Information is a release of information to the world in general and not an individual applicant.

Harm:

To provide the missing persons bulletins, comparison lists or circulated notices at this time may place both sensitive and potentially distressing information back into the public domain. The impact upon the mental health and wellbeing of family and friends of missing individuals cannot be understated or ignored. The disclosure of such sensitive and highly emotive information may resurface the anguish and pain experienced by any individuals with a link to any such individuals mentioned identified and therefore have unknown ramifications to the mental health and wellbeing of friends and loved ones.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 38(1)(a)(b)

In addition to the basic premise of being open and transparent, disclosure of the information requested would allow for greater public awareness around missing persons investigations run by Staffordshire Police and inform public debate upon how public funds were being spent at the time of the original investigation.



Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 38(1)(a)(b)

When disclosing information back into the public domain we must be mindful of the potential impact this may have. The impact such disclosure may have upon friends and family of the missing or any deceased individuals cannot be ignored. Placing such information into an open public forum would therefore have unforeseen ramifications upon the mental health and wellbeing of those close to any of the deceased/missing and place them at an increased risk of harm.

Balance test

When considering whether disclosure is appropriate, we must weigh the strongest reason for disclosure against the strongest reasons for non-disclosure. In this case, whilst the factors favouring disclosure are important in that it would adhere to the basic principle of being open and transparent, we believe when weighed against the risk of disclosure, then non-disclosure takes precedence.

Advice and assistance

In order to comply with our obligations under Section 16 of the Act, the obligation to provide advice and assistance, please find below links to the information requested.

- <https://www.staffordshire.police.uk/news/staffordshire/news/2021/march-2021/the-mystery-of-fred-and-his-unsolved-murder-spanning-half-a-century/>

Please be advised that all Freedom of Information request responses are published on the Staffordshire Police website although personal details are not included.

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:

IAT@staffordshire.police.uk

Or by Post to:

Information Access Team
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 Information Access Team 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 a Supervisor who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Information Access Team 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 Supervisor 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 Supervisor will reply to the appellant with the result of the review. If the appellant 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 link: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/foi-and-eir-complaints/foi-and-eir-complaints/>

Freedom of Information
Information Access Team