

22 January 2025

FOI Ref 17552

Request - You asked us the following:

I am writing to request the following data for these specific cases retrieved from the National Crime Agency, UK Missing Persons Unit database for Unidentified victims in your police force. This data will be used in a doctoral research relating to cold case investigations involving unidentified individuals. The purpose of the study is to collect data from different cases that involve unidentified individuals and to create a database that could provide an understanding of what forensic techniques are being used, whether they are being used effectively and what other techniques can be used to improve the investigations of cold cases in general.

I would be extremely grateful if you could fill out the information presented below in response to this FOI request. If a case that you present is required to be anonymous, can you please mention a code that will be used instead? If there is no retrievable information for the case, can you please mention why?

If you are considering presenting the information in the form of a spreadsheet, can you please follow the same format of the questions in the table below? You can also copy paste the questions below for each case and present the information in a document as well.

Cases in question:

23-002270

06-024324

06-024611

Links to the cases on the NCA website

<https://missingpersons.police.uk/en-gb/case/23-002270>

<https://missingpersons.police.uk/en-gb/case/06-024324>

<https://missingpersons.police.uk/en-gb/case/06-024611>

Questions to be answered for each case:

1. Anonymous code for case
2. Manner of death
3. During the original investigation, were any forensic techniques considered? What were they?
4. Since the original investigation, has the case been re-evaluated?
5. If re-evaluated, what were the forensic techniques considered/used.
6. Have the forensic techniques brought any significant leads to the case?
7. Did forensic techniques lead to efficient investigations?
8. During the entire investigation of the case, were any forensic experts consulted?
9. Were there any specific restrictions during the investigation, like time and funding?

We received your request on 04/12/2024 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

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



Staffordshire Police withholds the requested information.

- Cases in question:
23-002270
06-024324
06-024611

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<https://missingpersons.police.uk/en-gb/case/06-024324>

<https://missingpersons.police.uk/en-gb/case/06-024611>

Questions to be answered for each case:

- 1. Anonymous code for case
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- 4. Since the original investigation, has the case been re-evaluated?
- 5. If re-evaluated, what were the forensic techniques considered/used.
- 6. Have the forensic techniques brought any significant leads to the case?
- 7. Did forensic techniques lead to efficient investigations?
- 8. During the entire investigation of the case, were any forensic experts consulted?
- 9. Were there any specific restrictions during the investigation, like time and funding?

Please note that all three cases are still being investigated so with regard to these cases we are citing Section 30(1)(a)(b) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Investigations conducted by Public Authorities.

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 this particular request.

- Section 30(1)(a)(b) – Criminal Investigations

Section 30 is qualified and class based and, as such, we are required to apply the public interest test.

Section 23(5) is an absolute exemption and there is no requirement to consider the public interest in this case.

Regarding any further data in relation to this request, Staffordshire police can neither confirm nor deny that we hold any further information and I am citing Section 23 (5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000– Information supplied by, or concerning, certain Security Bodies.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 30(1)(a)(b)

Disclosure of the information would improve the public's knowledge and understanding of the investigatory process and, as all police investigations are publicly funded, would show how public funds are being spent.

Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 30(1)(a)(b)

Disclosure of the requested information would prejudice how investigations are carried out in the future. Staffordshire Police is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. Any release of information relating to ongoing investigations could prejudice and undermine those investigations. The prevention and detection of such matters could therefore be hindered and therefore risk interference with evidence, which could have detrimental impact on future investigations. In addition, the right to a fair trial could be undermined.

Balance test

Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act is a release of information to the world in general and not an individual applicant. Having considered the public interest factors we are required to determine whether on balance the factors favouring disclosure outweigh those which are against disclosure. It is our view that the factors favouring disclosure do not outweigh those which favour non-disclosure.

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



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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