

16 January 2025

FOI Ref 17660

Request - You asked us the following:

Following the introduction of the Pet Abduction Act 2024, police forces in England and Northern Ireland are now obliged to maintain data on the numbers of dogs and cats reported stolen in their respective areas.

In order to build a picture of what is happening as regards cat theft in particular, since 2015 I have been collating data using Freedom of Information requests from each police force across the UK. This data and our subsequent report (the Cat Theft Report 2022) helped inform the discussion as the Bill progressed through parliament. With a very few notable exceptions, most police forces have been very helpful and have consistently provided this information. I would therefore be grateful if you could complete my freedom of information request below:

1. What were the total number of cat theft/abduction crimes in 2024?
2. What was the outcome (charge/summons, community resolution, active investigation, evidential difficulties, no suspect identified) for each cat theft/abduction crime in 2024?
3. Please list specific cat breed types with amounts (stolen/abducted in 2024) — or 'breed unrecorded' or 'mixed breed'?

We received your request on 13/01/2025 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 readily retrieve information from our systems to answer this request. For the time period requested, there have been in excess of 14,400 occurrences of theft. As there is no mandatory field in which to record the object stolen and this may be recorded within any number of fields within the offence log, each occurrence would require manually reviewing to determine whether the offence involved the theft of a cat. A manual review of each occurrence log would take approximately 3 minutes per record. This would equate to in excess of 720 hours; therefore, provision of the data requested would

exceed the 18-hour time and cost threshold of the Freedom of Information 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.

In order to assist in refining your request, data for 2024 can be provided, where the offence is recorded as 'Pet Abduction Act 2024' and this has been recorded as a cat, along with the breed and outcome. However, please note further exemptions may apply.

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



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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