

10 July 2025

FOI Ref 21432

Request - You asked us the following:

I am making this request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Please limit the scope to the period from 1 January 2022 to the date of this request.

I request the following information:

1. Is your force currently using any form of facial recognition technology? If yes, please confirm whether this use began on or after 1 January 2022, and state the type(s) of deployment (e.g. Live Facial Recognition (LFR), Retrospective Facial Recognition (RFR), body-worn camera, fixed CCTV, mobile unit, traffic enforcement cameras, ANPR systems (if facial recognition-enabled) etc.).
2. Which company or companies provide the facial recognition technology your force is currently using?
3. Since 1 January 2022, has your force shared any facial recognition data in any form, or image-based intelligence, with any of the following:
 - o the State of Israel;
 - o any Israeli government body or agency;
 - o any Israeli company (including, but not limited to, those named in response to question 2, as well as private or state-affiliated entities); or
 - o any Israeli non-governmental organisation?

We received your request on 03/06/2025 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

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

- I am making this request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Please limit the scope to the period from 1 January 2022 to the date of this request.
- I request the following information:
- 1. Is your force currently using any form of facial recognition technology? If yes, please confirm whether this use began on or after 1 January 2022, and state the type(s) of deployment (e.g. Live Facial Recognition (LFR), Retrospective Facial Recognition (RFR), body-worn camera, fixed CCTV, mobile unit, traffic enforcement cameras, ANPR systems (if facial recognition-enabled) etc.). – **No information held with regard to overt use. With regard to covert use, Staffordshire Police can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any information relevant to this part of the request, please see the below exemptions.**
- 2. Which company or companies provide the facial recognition technology your force is currently using? – **Not applicable with regard to overt use. With regard to covert use, Staffordshire Police can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any information relevant to this part of the request, please see the below exemptions.**
- 3. Since 1 January 2022, has your force shared any facial recognition data in any form, or image-based intelligence, with any of the following:
 - o the State of Israel;



- o any Israeli government body or agency;
 - o any Israeli company (including, but not limited to, those named in response to question 2, as well as private or state-affiliated entities); or
 - o any Israeli non-governmental organisation?
- Neither confirm nor deny, please see the below exemptions.**

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

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 parts of this particular request.

Staffordshire Police can neither confirm nor deny whether any further information relevant to this request is held, as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply by virtue of the following exemptions:

- Section 23(5) Information supplied by or concerning certain Security Bodies Section 23 is a class based absolute exemption and there is no requirement to consider the public interest in this case.
- Section 24(2) National Security
- Section 27(4) International Relations
- Section 31(3) Law Enforcement

Sections 24, 27 and 31 are qualified exemptions and as such there is a requirement to articulate the harm and conduct a test of the public interest in confirmation or denial.

This request attracts a NCND response as to confirm or deny whether the requested information is, or is not, held would disclose whether or not intelligence sharing had taken place. This would have the effect of compromising our law enforcement functions, current or future investigations and be detrimental to national security. As such, Sections 24(2) and 31(3) of the Act apply.

To confirm or deny whether information is, or is not, held in relation sharing information as described at Question 3 would be detrimental to international relations between the United Kingdom and Israel. Therefore, Section 27(4) of the Act is engaged.

In addition, by neither confirming nor denying that information is held prevents disclosure of whether or not there has been any involvement of the security bodies in this matter, invoking Section 23(5) of the Act.

Harm Overall

Public safety is of paramount importance to the policing purpose and must be taken into account in deciding whether to disclose information, if held, or not. To confirm or deny whether Staffordshire Police holds the requested information, would allow interested parties to gain an upper hand and awareness of policing decisions used to safeguard national security. As you may be aware, disclosure under FOIA is a release to the public at large. Therefore, to confirm or deny the existence of any information pertaining to information and intelligence sharing could potentially be misused proving detrimental to national security.

Additionally, whilst not questioning the motives of the applicant, confirming or denying that any other information relating to the covert practise of facial recognition would show criminals what the capacity, tactical abilities and capabilities of the force are, allowing them to target specific areas of the UK to conduct their criminal/terrorist activities.

Confirming or denying the specific circumstances in which the Police Service may or may not deploy covert facial recognition would lead to an increased risk of harm to covert investigations and compromise law enforcement. This would be to the detriment of providing an efficient policing service and a failure in providing a duty of care to all members of the public. Criminals, including terrorists would gain a greater understanding of the police's methods and techniques, enabling offenders to take steps to counter them. It may also suggest the limitations of police capabilities in this area, which may further encourage criminal/terrorist activity by exposing potential vulnerabilities. This detrimental effect is increased if the request is made to several different law enforcement bodies. In addition to the local criminal fraternity now being better informed, those intent on organised crime throughout the UK will be able to map where the use of certain tactics are or are not deployed

With regards to data sharing. Confirming or denying whether any information is held would be of use to those who seek to disrupt police activity as it would, by process of elimination, enable individuals with the inclination to identify what form of intelligence has been made, and to whom. To confirm whether any information is held in respect of one piece of information and then neither confirm nor deny whether another piece of information is held, is likely to lead the public to deduce that information is held where a NCND response is applied. This would enable individuals to evade detection and compromise the ability of the police to safeguard national security.

Any information identifying the focus of policing activity could be used to the advantage of terrorists, extremist or criminal organisations. Information that undermines the operational integrity of these operational activities (whether information is or is not held in this instance) will adversely affect public safety and have a negative impact on both national security and law enforcement.

It remains our position that Staffordshire Police will not confirm or deny whether it holds any information pertinent to your request. This would be counter effective to the safeguarding of national security, and increase the risk of crime if Staffordshire Police does not take a consistent approach to requests regarding intelligence sharing. An increase in crime which arises out of an inconsistent approach to the 'NCND' principle may lead to an escalation of criminal activity that could have a detrimental effect on national security and police intelligence.

Staffordshire Police works in partnership with other partners in order to combat issues such as terrorism, organised crime, subversion and espionage. Confirming or denying that information exists relevant to this request would seriously undermine this partnership approach. To confirm or deny whether any information is held relevant to this request would jeopardise international relations, not only with Israel, but any other country with whom diplomatic relations are maintained.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring confirmation or denial for S24

The public are entitled to know how public funds are spent and by confirming or denying that this information is held would allow them to see where money is being spent and know that Staffordshire Police is undertaking its duty to robustly tackle any form of criminal and terrorist activity, which could include the

sharing of intelligence.

With regards to confirming or denying the covert use of Facial Recognition technology. Confirming or denying that any other information exists relevant to the request would lead to a better-informed public and the public are entitled to know how public funds are spent.

Factors against confirmation or denial for S24

Confirmation or denial of this nature would render security measures less effective. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or infrastructure of the UK and increase the risk of harm to the public. To counter this, a full review of security measures would be needed and additional costs would be incurred.

With regards to confirming or denying the covert use of Facial Recognition technology. To confirm or deny whether Staffordshire Police hold any additional information would allow inferences to be made about the nature and extent of national security related activities which may or may not take place. This could enable terrorist groups to take steps to avoid detection, and as such, confirmation or denial would be damaging to national security. By confirming or denying any policing arrangements of this nature would render national security measures less effective. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or infra-structure on the UK and increase the risk of harm to the public.

Factors favouring confirmation or denial for S27

Confirming or denying whether any information is held would increase public knowledge about our relations with other countries, in this case Israel.

Factors against confirmation or denial for S27

Section 27 recognises that the effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between governments. Confirming or denying that any information is held relevant to the request would further destroy that trust and confidence, which in turn would hamper international relations affecting the UK's ability to protect and promote the country's interests.

Factors favouring confirmation or denial for S31

Confirming or denying whether Staffordshire Police holds information relevant to this request the public would see where public funds have been spent and allow the Police service to appear more open and transparent. Staffordshire Police is committed to openness and transparency with the general public. When a request for information is made it is correct that the police make appropriate information available to the general public. The provision of information, through confirming or denying whether information relevant to this request is held would accordingly, reinforce our commitment to be an open and transparent organisation.

With regards to confirming or denying the use of Facial Recognition technology. Confirming or denying whether any further information is held would allow the public to see where public funds have been spent and allow the Police service to appear more open and transparent.

Factors against confirmation or denial for S31

By confirming or denying with whom Staffordshire Police shares intelligence, and in what form, would mean that law enforcement tactics would be compromised, which would hinder the prevention and detection of crime. Security arrangements and tactics are re-used and have been monitored by criminal groups, fixated individuals and terrorists. These security arrangements and tactics would need to be

reviewed which would require more resources and would add to the cost to the public purse.

Disclosure would technically be releasing sensitive operational information, if held, into the public domain, which would enable those with the time, capacity and inclination to try and map strategies used.

With regards to the disclosure of the use of covert Facial Recognition technology. By confirming or denying whether any further information is held would mean that law enforcement tactics would be compromised which would hinder the prevention and detection of crime. Security arrangements and tactics are re-used and have been monitored by criminal groups, fixated individuals and terrorists. These security arrangements and tactics would need to be reviewed which would require more resources and would add to the cost to the public purse.

Balance Test

When balancing the Public Interest Test we have to consider whether the information, if held, should be released into the public domain. Arguments need to be weighed against each other.

The security of the country is of paramount importance and Staffordshire Police will not divulge whether information is or is not held if to do so would undermine National Security, our law enforcement functions or the investigative process. Whilst it is recognised that there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations and providing assurance that the police service is appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat posed by criminals and terrorists, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the integrity of police investigations and operations.

As much as there is public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. To confirm or deny the existence of the requested information, would allow interested parties to gain an upper hand and awareness of policing decisions about police intelligence sharing, leading to an increase of harm to law enforcement and national security.

Whilst to confirm or deny that information is held would allow for a greater understanding of how police intelligence is shared, this could undermine the role and effectiveness of any future operations. Any disclosure of information, if held, which has the potential to jeopardise an operation/investigation, or undermine international relations is therefore likely to prejudice law enforcement.

Therefore, after weighing up the competing interests I have determined that confirmation or denial of any information being held relating to intelligence sharing, by any means, relevant to this request would not be in the public interest.

However, this should not be taken as necessarily indicating that any information that would meet your request exists or does not exist.

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.



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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