

18 July 2025

FOI Ref 21595

Request - You asked us the following:

I would be grateful if you could provide the following information for your force for each of the past 10 calendar years (2015 to 2025 inclusive):

1. Police Officer Suicides

- The number of police officers (serving or recently serving) who have died by suicide.

2. Investigations at Time of Death

Of those officers who died by suicide:

- How many were under investigation by your Professional Standards Department (PSD)?
- How many were under investigation by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)?

3. Occupational and Personal Context (if available and anonymised)

For each officer who died by suicide, please provide (where available and without compromising privacy):

- Their role or department (e.g., frontline, CID, custody, firearms).
- Their length of service.
- Whether they had accessed internal mental health or wellbeing services.
- Whether they were on sick leave or had recently returned from sick leave.
- Whether they were subject to misconduct or disciplinary proceedings.
- Age, gender, and ethnicity (if recorded and anonymised).

We received your request on 18/07/2025 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

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

Staffordshire Police holds some of the requested information

- The total number of serving and former police officers and staff from your force who have died by suspected suicide – **Withheld, section 38.**
- The total number of serving and former police officers and staff from your force who have died by suspected suicide - with the death recorded during or after misconduct proceedings – **Withheld, section 38.**

Can I request that this information is:

- Broken down clearly by individual year – **Withheld, section 38.**
- Broken down by whether the individuals were either serving or former officers and staff – **Withheld, section 38.**

Please be advised we do not hold any data prior to the financial year 2023/2024. Furthermore, we only hold this data in financial years when the National Police Chiefs' Council introduced new codes for death in service in June 2023.

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 this particular request.

- 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.

Harm:

Disclosure of information relating to officers and staff that have died due to suicide, whilst potentially undergoing or having undergone misconduct investigations would obviously place both sensitive and potentially distressing information into the public domain. The impact upon the mental health and wellbeing of not only close family and friends but also colleagues 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 close link to any such staff identified and therefore have unknown ramifications to the mental health and wellbeing of close 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 would allow for greater public awareness around how Staffordshire Police handle sensitive matters.

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

When disclosing information into the public domain we must be mindful of the potential impact this may have. Clearly information relating to the death of any individual, combined with information highlighting whether they were involved within misconduct matters, would invite speculation upon the cause and mental state of any individuals so identified. The impact such speculation may have upon close friends and family 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 the deceased 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.

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:

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



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

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