

12 May 2025

FOI Ref 21160

Request - You asked us the following:

I would like to request information under the FOI Act.

BACKGROUND

I am seeking information regarding the sharing of individuals' personal data by universities/university accommodation providers with the police in connection with protest activity, including (but not limited to) verbal or written statements, flyering, picketing, waving of banners, and encampments.

Please take a broad interpretation of protest activity, including where an individual could be said to fall under the scope of this request because of what the police or the university has considered to be wider misconduct/criminality related to their activism, such as criminal damage, rather than specifically their involvement in activism.

QUESTIONS

Please provide the following information:

(1) Copies of any and all Information Sharing Agreements between your force and universities or university accommodation providers within your police force area.

(2) If retrievable within the cost limit, the number of individuals whose personal data your force has requested and/or received from a UK university or university accommodation provider since 1 October 2023 under the terms of the ISAs disclosed in response to question 1.

(3) If retrievable within the cost limit, please break this down the figures disclosed in response to Q2 by:
A. The name of university or accommodation provider (eg Unite) the data was requested/received from B. The outcome of the data request, if police made one (eg provided / refused) C. The reason for sharing data, including, whether it was in connection with any protest activity the data subject was involved in (if so, please specify the type of cause eg Pro-Palestinian, Environmental, Animal Rights)

(4) Copies of any and all Community Impact Assessments (CIAs) conducted in relation to the policing of pro-Palestinian protests events in your police force area since 1 October 2023, as well as any overarching CIAs.*

(5) Copies of any and all Equality Impact Assessments conducted in relation to the policing of pro-Palestinian protests in your police force area since 1 October 2023, as well as any overarching EIAs.*

*A NOTE ON S12 COST EXEMPTION:

In regards to questions 4 and 5 above, if it would exceed the cost limit to conduct searches for every CIA and EIA completed for every pro-Palestine protest event which has occurred within the relevant timeframe, then please instead provide only any overarching CIA(s) and EIA(s)

Clarification received 15/04/2025

By 'University Accommodation Providers' I'm referring to any third party companies which provide student accommodation on behalf of a university, such as Unite Student Accommodation which provides housing for students and many universities across the UK. This may be less applicable to Universities in your police force area. It is my understanding that Staffordshire and Keele universities do not use any third party companies to provide their student accommodation.

We received your request on 31/03/2025 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.

- 1) Copies of any and all Information Sharing Agreements between your force and universities or university accommodation providers within your police force area. – **Disclosed, please see the accompanying file entitled 'FOI 21160 Protest Activity Information Sharing Data'.**
- 2) If retrievable within the cost limit, the number of individuals whose personal data your force has requested and/or received from a UK university or university accommodation provider since 1 October 2023 under the terms of the ISAs disclosed in response to question 1. – **No information held.**
- 3) If retrievable within the cost limit, please break this down the figures disclosed in response to Q2 by: The name of university or accommodation provider (eg Unite) the data was requested/received from B. The outcome of the data request, if police made one (eg provided / refused) C. The reason for sharing data, including, whether it was in connection with any protest activity the data subject was involved in (if so, please specify the type of cause eg Pro-Palestinian, Environmental, Animal Rights) – **No information held.**
- 4) Copies of any and all Community Impact Assessments (CIAs) conducted in relation to the policing of pro-Palestinian protests events in your police force area since 1 October 2023, as well as any overarching CIAs.* - **Withheld.**
- 5) Copies of any and all Equality Impact Assessments conducted in relation to the policing of pro-Palestinian protests in your police force area since 1 October 2023, as well as any overarching EIAs.* - **Withheld.**

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 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.

- 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 31 (1) (a) (b) - Law Enforcement.

Information is exempt from disclosure under S31 (1) (a) (b) where the release of Information would, or would likely to, prejudice the prevention and detection of crime and/ or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders. 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:

To provide sharing agreements for specific departments could undermine existing or future investigations, operations and police tactics. It would allow those with ill intent to cause disruption to operational policing and prejudice the prevention and detection of crime. Knowing call signs and associated information for specific areas would allow individuals to speak on the policing network with a level of validity that could lead to major disruption to the force communications network. It would also aide criminals in disrupting events involving these areas.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 31(1)(a)(b)

To disclose this information would adhere to the basic principle of being open and transparent, it would also lead to a better public awareness of the workings of the police force and the communications used with operations and during routine policing.

Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 31(1)(a)(b)

Releasing such data would give those individuals with the intent to do so, the intelligence required to disrupt police activity. This knowledge would allow those with ill intent to target their offending more effectively which would inevitably lead to an increased likelihood of criminal activity and an increased danger to the public. Any disclosure of information which is likely to undermine the ability to serve the public in preventing and detecting crime can only be considered as being harmful to the public.

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.

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

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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
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