

9 May 2025

FOI Ref 21250

Request - You asked us the following:

1. Please tell me, with reference to each of the last four financial years (21/22) (22/23) (23/24) and (24/25), the number of:

- a) Substance misuse tests undertaken at random on your force's officers (not civilian staff).
- b) Substance misuse tests administered with cause on your force's officers (not civilian staff)
- c) Substance misuse tests given on a pre-employment basis to people applying to be a police officer with your force.
- d) The number of positive tests to the number of tests undertaken in total for (a), (b) and (c).

2. Please break down 1d (the number of positive tests) by:

- a) The drug detected (e.g. cannabis, cocaine).
- b) The disciplinary measures resulting (e.g. final warning, dismissed, job offer withdrawn).
- c) Whether the substance misuse test was given at random, with cause or on a pre-employment basis.

NOTE: For pre-employment tests, I do not require that you break down the number of positives by substance detected.

We received your request on 22/04/2025 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 questions 1c and 2c of this request. For the time period requested, there have been in excess of 550 medicals conducted as part of pre-employment checks. In order to determine whether a substance misuse test was given on a pre-employment basis, the record for each of these medicals would require manual review. Some of these are held in an electronic format whilst others are held as paper records. As we cannot retrieve the data for question 1c within the 18 hour time threshold, as stipulated by the Freedom of Information Act, we would not be able to respond to question 1d and questions 2a, 2b and 2c wholly. To extract this data would therefore require a very labour-intensive manual trawl through each record.

From dip sampling, it has been estimated that it would take approximately 10-30 minutes to review each record to answer this request, this would equate to between 91 and 275 hours. To achieve this task would therefore exceed the 18-hour time and cost threshold of the FOI 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.

If question 1c and 2c were withdrawn, Staffordshire Police would be able to provide the following:

1. Please tell me, with reference to each of the last four financial years (21/22) (22/23) (23/24) and (24/25), the number of:
 - a) Substance misuse tests undertaken at random on your force's officers (not civilian staff).
 - b) Substance misuse tests administered with cause on your force's officers (not civilian staff)
 - d) The number of positive tests to the number of tests undertaken in total for (a) and (b).
2. Please break down 1d (the number of positive tests) by:
 - a) The drug detected (e.g. cannabis, cocaine).
 - b) The disciplinary measures resulting (e.g. final warning, dismissed, job offer withdrawn).

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.



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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