

13 November 2025

FOI Ref 21997

Request - You asked us the following:

I'd like to request the following information under the FOI Act. It concerns investigations which involve digital forensics.

1. How many staff in your force/contractors are currently assigned to work on digital forensics (examining digital devices seized for evidence as part of investigations).
2. What is the current average time it takes to examine a device (from seizing to completion).
3. What is the current backlog of digital devices which your force needs to examine.
4. How many current investigations involve examining digital devices and what percentage of your total number of ongoing investigations is this?
5. What is the current waiting time for the device which has been waiting to be investigated the longest and what kind of allegation/investigation does this relate to?
6. If a contractor firm is used to carry out this work, could I please ask what it is and how much the firm is paid.
7. If the cost limit has not yet been reached, could I please ask what the answer was to question two in each of the most five recent calendar years. (IE) 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020.
8. If the cost limit has still not been reached, could I please ask for the answer to question three for 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020. Please provide an average backlog figure.

Clarification from applicant 21/10/2025

Sorry, for question three, could I also have a breakdown of devices - ie phones, ipads etc.

We received your request on 21/10/2025 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 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 period requested, there have been more than 83,000 open occurrences. To determine whether a current investigation involves examining digital devices, the record for each offence would require manual

review. 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 3 minutes to review each record to answer this request, this would equate to over 4,150 hours. To achieve this task would therefore 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, to comply with this obligation please see below.

If your request were amended, Staffordshire Police would be able to provide a response to the following:

1. How many staff in your force/contractors are currently assigned to work on digital forensics (examining digital devices seized for evidence as part of investigations).
2. What is the current average time it takes to examine a device (from seizing to completion).
3. What is the current backlog of digital devices which your force needs to examine, with a breakdown of device types.
4. What is the current waiting time for the device which has been waiting to be investigated the longest and what kind of allegation/investigation does this relate to?
5. If a contractor firm is used to carry out this work, could I please ask what it is and how much the firm is paid.
6. If the cost limit has not yet been reached, could I please ask what the answer was to question two for 2024 (please note that data prior to this year is not held).
7. If the cost limit has still not been reached, could I please ask for the answer to question three for 2024 and 2023 (please note that data prior to 2023 is not held).

Please note that further substantive exemptions will apply.

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:

IAT@staffordshire.police.uk

Or by Post to:



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Information Access Team
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 Information Access Team 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 a supervisor who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Information Access Team 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 Supervisor 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, considering the matters raised by the complaint.

4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Supervisor will reply to the appellant with the result of the review. If the appellant 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 link:
<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/foi-and-eir-complaints/foi-and-eir-complaints/>

Freedom of Information
Information Access Team