

18 November 2025

FOI Ref 22085

**Request - You asked us the following:**

Please provide me with the following information:

1. The number of prisoners your force has been notified of after they were released from prison by mistake at a time other than their scheduled release date. Please provide me with the information for the years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025, broken down by year.
2. If the data in question 1 can be broken down by prison - i.e., the prison from which the prisoners were released at a different time than their scheduled release date - please do so.
3. The number of prisoners your force was notified of after they were released from prison by mistake at an earlier time than their scheduled release date. Please provide me with the information for the years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025.
4. If the data in question 3 can be broken down by prison - i.e., the prison from which the prisoners were mistakenly released early - please do so.
5. For the prisoners released early in each year, please inform me of whether they were returned to prison and, if so, when. Please clarify whether any prisoners released early were not returned to the prison to serve their sentence and are still on the run.

We received your request on 10/11/2025 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 this request. For the last month alone there has been 22,930 incidents. There is no central repository or database in which this information can be retrieved. The only way to retrieve this information would be to do a very labour-intensive manual trawl through each recorded incident to see whether it related to a report from a prison to state they had released a prisoner by mistake.

From dip sampling, it has been estimated that it would take approximately 4 minutes to review each record. For one month alone, this would equate to over 1,528 hours. To achieve this task would therefore exceed the 18-hour time and cost threshold of the FOI Act by some considerable margin.



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### **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.

You may wish to contact the Home Office to obtain this information, who may be able to assist with your request.

[Home Office - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Please be advised that all Freedom of Information request responses are published on the SP 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](mailto:IAT@staffordshire.police.uk)

Or by Post to:

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.



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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, taking into account 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