

14 October 2025

FOI Ref 21834

Request - You asked us the following:

I am writing to make an open government request for information to which I am entitled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Please provide the following information for the period 1 January 2024 - 31 December 2024.

1. How many individual children (those aged 0 - 17) were reported missing in your policing area?
2. How many missing incidents were reported in relation to those missing children (those aged 0 - 17)?
3. How many of those missing incidents had a:
 - a. Sexual exploitation marker
 - b. Mental health marker
 - c. Criminal exploitation marker
 - d. Trafficking marker
4. In how many incidents was there evidence of harm having occurred?
5. In how many of those incidents in question 4 was the harm:
 - a. Physical
 - b. Sexual
 - c. Self-harm
 - d. Suicide
 - e. Emotional / psychological
6. If you routinely record another type of risk marker / type of harm that is not listed here, please also include that information and the number of incidents in which it was recorded.

Clarification received from applicant 13/10/2025

Thank you for your query regarding clarification of the terms "incident" and "harm" in our FOI request, and apologies for the delayed response.

I appreciate that these terms can be interpreted broadly, and I am happy to clarify our intent. The definitions are informed by the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on missing persons, which frames missing episodes as indicators of potential harm and uses a risk-based approach to guide police response.

1. Definition of "Incident"

For the purposes of this request, "incident" refers to:

Any recorded episode in which a child (aged 0–17) was reported missing to your force and a missing person report was created, regardless of duration or outcome.

2. Definition of "Harm"

We define 'harm' in line with the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice on missing persons, which treats going missing as an indicator of potential harm. Harm includes physical, sexual, emotional,



psychological, and self-inflicted harm, as well as harm arising from criminal exploitation, trafficking, mental health crisis, and being a victim of crime. These categories are recognised within the APP and associated safeguarding frameworks.

We are seeking data on incidents where there was evidence that harm occurred, not merely the potential for harm. This could include:

- Medical treatment required
- Disclosure of abuse or exploitation
- Observed injuries or distress
- Information from return home interviews or multi-agency reports

We understand that some incidents may involve minor injuries (e.g. stubbing a toe or falling from a tree). These would only be relevant if they were recorded as evidence of harm in the missing person report or associated safeguarding documentation.

If your force routinely records other types of harm or risk markers (e.g. domestic abuse, substance misuse, gang involvement), we would welcome inclusion of those under question 6.

I hope this helps to clarify the uncertainty. If you require any additional clarification then please don't hesitate to reach out again.

We received your request on 09/09/2025 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

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

Staffordshire Police holds the requested information.

1. How many individual children (those aged 0 - 17) were reported missing in your policing area? - **Disclosed, 1337.**
2. How many missing incidents were reported in relation to those missing children (those aged 0 - 17)? - **Disclosed, 3509.**
3. How many of those missing incidents had a:
 - a. Sexual exploitation marker - **Partially disclosed, 269.**
 - b. Mental health marker - **No information held.**
 - c. Criminal exploitation marker - **Partially disclosed, 433.**
 - d. Trafficking marker - **Partially disclosed, 24.**

Please be advised this data pertains to applied flags.

4. In how many incidents was there evidence of harm having occurred? - **Disclosed, 139.**
5. In how many of those incidents in question 4 was the harm:
 - a. Physical - **Partially disclosed, 36**
 - b. Sexual - **Partially disclosed, 5.**
 - c. Self-harm - **Partially disclosed, 55.**
 - d. Suicide - **Partially disclosed, nil.**
 - e. Emotional / psychological - **Partially disclosed, nil.**

6. If you routinely record another type of risk marker / type of harm that is not listed here, please also include that information and the number of incidents in which it was recorded. – **Partially disclosed, Physical Injury - 36, Accidental Harm – 7.**

Please note that this data has been provided to the best of our ability, subject to the limitation of current recording protocols and systems/software. Additional incidents may have been recorded during these timescales but are awaiting finalisation and input onto these systems and would not be present within this dataset.

Every effort is made to ensure that the data presented is accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that this has been extracted from multiple sources, developed for specific policing purposes, for which data extraction methods have not been specifically designed to directly correlate with the terminology of this request. Therefore, the data presented is subject to the inaccuracies and idiosyncrasies inherent in any large-scale recording system.

As a consequence, care should be taken in the interpretation and presentation of this data, so as to not misrepresent the whole or any part of the data disclosed.

Staffordshire Police can neither confirm nor deny whether further information relevant to this request is held, as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply by virtue of the following exemption:

- Section 23(5) – Information supplied by, or concerning certain security bodies
- Section 23 is an absolute class-based exemption and as such does not require the application of a Public Interest Test

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:

Information Access Team
Staffordshire Police HQ
PO Box 3167
Stafford



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

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, 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