

23 October 2025

FOI Ref 21880

Request - You asked us the following:

This is a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act. Please provide me with the following information relating to payments made to Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS).

1. For the financial years 21/22, 22/23, 23/24, 24/25 and 25/26 (so far) please provide a value for how much the police force has spent on CHIS, providing a breakdown for each FY
2. For the financial years 21/22, 22/23, 23/24, 24/25 and 25/26 (so far) please state how many CHIS authorisations were granted to the police force, providing a breakdown for each FY
3. For the financial years 21/22, 22/23, 23/24, 24/25 and 25/26 (so far) please state how much the police force has spent on CHIS related to Palestine protest groups, providing a breakdown for each FY

We received your request on 23/09/2025 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

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

Staffordshire Police holds/does not hold the requested information.

1. For the financial years 21/22, 22/23, 23/24, 24/25 and 25/26 (so far) please provide a value for how much the police force has spent on CHIS, providing a breakdown for each FY – **Partially disclosed, please see the accompanying file entitled 'FOI 21880 Covert Human Intelligence Sources Payments Data'.**
2. For the financial years 21/22, 22/23, 23/24, 24/25 and 25/26 (so far) please state how many CHIS authorisations were granted to the police force, providing a breakdown for each FY – **No information held.**
3. For the financial years 21/22, 22/23, 23/24, 24/25 and 25/26 (so far) please state how much the police force has spent on CHIS related to Palestine protest groups, providing a breakdown for each FY – **Neither confirm nor deny, section 23(5), section 24(2), section 30(3), section 31(3), section 40(5).**

The following exemptions have been applied for Question 1:

- Section 23(1) – 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.

- Section 24 (1) – National Security

Section 24 is a qualified exemption and as such there is a requirement to articulate the harm and conduct a test of the public interest.

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

Information is exempt from disclosure under Section 31 (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.

- Section 30(2)(b) - Confidential Sources

Information relates to obtaining information from confidential sources. 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:

Disclosure of the requested information could reasonably be expected to prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs, particularly in relation to law enforcement and the protection of confidential sources. Releasing such information may undermine the trust and cooperation between the police and informants, potentially deterring individuals from providing vital intelligence in the future. It could also compromise ongoing or future investigations, and adversely affect operational effectiveness. Therefore, maintaining this exemption is necessary to safeguard the integrity of law enforcement processes and uphold public safety.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure - Section 24 (1)

To confirm whether any other information is held relating to this request would better inform the general public as to the existence of policing and law enforcement capabilities within specific geographical locations. In turn, this can increase public confidence with the likely effect of dissuading mal-actors from operating within specific areas or regions.

Factors favouring non-disclosure - Section 24 (1)

Security measures are put in place to protect the community that we serve. To confirm whether any other information is held relevant to this request would provide a detailed account of the tactical infrastructure of not only a force area but also the country as a whole. This would highlight to terrorists and individuals intent on carrying out criminal or terrorist activity any vulnerabilities within the localities of specific forces. Confirmation, if held, would also allow inferences to be made about the nature and extent of national security related activities. This could enable terrorist groups to target sensitive police locations, and as such, confirmation or denial would be damaging to national security. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or infra-structure both within the UK and Internationally.

Irrespective as to whether any information is or isn't held, the public entrust the Police Service to make appropriate decisions with regard to their safety and protection and the only way of reducing risk is to be cautious with what is placed into the public domain.

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(2)(b)

To disclose this data would lead to financial transparency and is a legitimate public interest and may help ensure that CHIS-related spending is subject to appropriate oversight.

Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 30(2)(b)

Disclosure could undermine the confidentiality of sources even without directly identifying individuals, potentially discouraging future cooperation from informants, compromising the safety of individuals, and affecting the effectiveness of covert operations.

Balance test

When considering whether disclosure is appropriate, we must weigh the strongest reason for disclosure against the strongest reasons for non-disclosure. In this case, whilst the factors favouring disclosure are important in that it would adhere to the basic principle of being open and transparent, we believe when weighed against the risk of disclosure undermining our ability to prevent and detect crime and hindering our ability to protect the public, then non-disclosure takes precedence.

Staffordshire Police can neither confirm nor deny whether information relevant to parts of 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 exemptions:

The following exemptions have been applied for Question 3:

- Section 23(5) – Information Supplied By Or Concerning Certain Security Bodies:
Section 23(5) provides an exemption from the duty to confirm or deny whether information is held if doing so would involve the disclosure of any information (whether or not already recorded) which was directly or indirectly supplied by, or relates to, any of the bodies specified in subsection (3).
- Section 24(2) - National Security
Section 24(2) provides an exemption from the duty to confirm or deny whether information is held, where the exemption is required for the purposes of safeguarding national security.



- Section 30(3) - Investigations

30(3) The duty to confirm or deny does not arise in relation to information which is (or if it were held by the public authority would be) exempt information by virtue of subsection (1) or (2)

- Section 31(3) – Law Enforcement

The duty to confirm or deny does not arise if, or to the extent that, compliance with section 1 (1) (a) would, or would be likely to, prejudice any of the matters mentioned in subsection (1)

- Section 40(5) – Personal Information

Section 40 (5) 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 that may or may not be 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.

Harm:

There is considerable harm attributed to the confirmation or denial that any other information is held in relation to police confidential sources. Such information would not exist had Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) not been required to participate in the effective investigation of criminal matters. The information would only be held if it were obtained and recorded by the force for the purpose of its functions in relation to criminal investigations.

Any disclosure such as in this request that may reduce the flow of information to the Police Service and intelligence agencies would have a substantial prejudicial impact on the ability of such authorities to collect reliable and accurate intelligence. Furthermore, law enforcement bodies would become dependent on more costly and time consuming methods of collecting intelligence. Whilst it may not be seen by the public to be wholly acceptable to offer payments to individuals who are close to criminal activity, CHIS are often the most valuable sources of information and enable the police and other agencies to secure evidence and subsequent prosecutions.

Covert Human Intelligence Sources (regardless of their motivation) provide information at particular personal risk to themselves and their families. As previous cases have shown, where a CHIS is identified it can result in substantial physical harm, or mental trauma resulting from the threat of physical harm. This problem is particularly acute in cases relating to serious crime and terrorism where the threat against individuals is substantial.

The use of CHIS is regulated by the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act which requires authorities to take into account the provisions of the Human Rights Act when using CHIS (and other covert techniques). Police forces are reminded of their obligation under Article 2 of the Human Rights Act which requires them to protect human life. This is further supported by a High Court hearing *Van Colle v Chief Constable Hertfordshire Police*. In this case the force concerned failed to provide adequate protection to an individual whose life was at risk because of the criminal acts of a third party. The witness was murdered by a person whom he was about to give evidence against in a criminal trial.

Those determined to identify informants have the ability to use small pieces of information in order to build a more complete picture and it is the cumulative effect of information disclosures that the Police Service feel will lead to this prejudice being realised.

Covert Human Intelligence Sources (regardless of their motivation) provide information at particular personal risk to themselves and their families. As previous cases have shown, where a CHIS is identified it can result in substantial physical harm, or mental trauma resulting from the threat of physical harm. This problem is particularly acute in cases relating to serious crime and terrorism where the threat against individuals is substantial. To confirm or deny any additional information would place those individual(s), if any, at an increased risk from danger as detailed above.

It may be viewed by those not involved in the management of informants that a statistical number in itself is unlikely to cause any such adverse effects. However, the subject has to be viewed more holistically. Those determined to identify informants have the ability to use small pieces of information in order to build a more complete picture and it is the cumulative effect of information disclosures that the Police Service feel will lead to this prejudice being realised.

Confirming or denying any additional information exists could impact on the recruitment and retention of CHIS in general, due to the perception of (rather than the actual) risk of identification. In an Information Tribunal case relating to the payments made to CHIS in Croydon (EA/2010/0006), it was accepted that this argument applied as much to CHIS providing intelligence in relation to national security concerns as to CHIS engaged in countering more traditional criminal threats. In this way, the disclosure of payment information would damage national security through discouraging current national security CHIS from co-operating with the Police Service in other geographical areas, or preventing the recruitment of national security CHIS in the future - regardless of whether the area in question actually currently runs CHIS reporting on serious crime, terrorist or other threats.

Public Interest Test

Factors Favouring Confirmation or Denial – Section 24(2)

The public are entitled to know how public funds are spent and by confirming or denying that this information is held would allow them to see where money is being spent and know that Staffordshire Police is undertaking its duty to robustly tackle any form of activity relevant to this request. The information simply relates to national security and disclosure would not actually harm it.

Factors Against Confirmation or Denial - Section 24(2)

Confirmation of any policing arrangements of this nature would render security measures less effective. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or infrastructure

of the UK and increase the risk of harm to the public. To counter this, a full review of security measures would be needed and additional costs would be incurred.

By confirming or denying any policing arrangements of this nature would render national security measures less effective. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or infra-structure of the UK and increase the risk of harm to the public.

Factors Favouring Confirmation or Denial - Section 30(3)

The confirmation or denial that information is held by Staffordshire Police would provide a greater insight into policing and how resources are allocated to investigate crimes. The confirmation or denial that any other information is or is not held would identify how often Staffordshire Police utilise CHIS within this type of investigation.

Factors Against Confirmation or Denial - Section 30(3)

To confirm that Staffordshire Police have used informants with previous investigations and criminal convictions in specific investigations would provide sensitive information that would undermine policing and investigations.

Factors Favouring Confirmation or Denial - Section 31(3)

Confirming or denying whether Staffordshire Police holds information relevant to this request the public would see where public funds have been spent and allow the Police service to appear more open and transparent. Staffordshire Police is committed to openness and transparency with the general public. When a request for information is made, it is correct that the police make appropriate information available to the general public. The provision of information, through confirming or denying whether information relevant to this request is held would accordingly, reinforce our commitment to be an open and transparent organisation.

Factors Against Confirmation or Denial - Section 31(3)

By confirming or denying whether information is held could compromise law enforcement tactics which would hinder the prevention and detection of crime and impact on police resources which may need to be increased to reassure the public and protect the surrounding community. This would result in more risk to the public and consequently require the use of more police resources.

Balance Test:

When balancing the Public Interest Test we have to consider whether the information, if held, should be released into the public domain. Arguments need to be weighed against each other.

The security of the country is of paramount importance and Staffordshire Police will not divulge whether information is or is not held if to do so would undermine National Security, our law enforcement functions or the investigative process. Whilst it is recognised that there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations and providing assurance that the police service is appropriately and effectively

engaging with the threat posed by various groups or individuals, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the integrity of police investigations and operations in this highly sensitive area.

As much as there is public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. Areas of interest to the police are sensitive to the extent that they reveal local intelligence. To confirm or deny the existence of the requested information, would allow interested parties to gain an upper hand and awareness of policing decisions used during investigations, leading to an increase of harm to either the investigation itself, and the subject of the investigation.

Whilst to confirm or deny that information is held, would reassure the public that any operation had been or was being properly conducted and allow for a greater understanding of how information has been gathered, this could undermine the role and effectiveness of any future operations. Any disclosure of information, if held, which has the potential to jeopardise an operation/investigation, is therefore likely to prejudice law enforcement.

Therefore, at this time Staffordshire Police have determined that confirmation or denial that any other information is held relating to CHIS and Palestine Protest groups would not be in the public interest.

However, this should not be taken as necessarily indicating that any information that would meet your request exists or does not exist.

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
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