

4 September 2025

FOI Ref 21729

Request - You asked us the following:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I am requesting the following information relating to use of Dispersal Order powers in your local area between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2024:

Dispersal Orders:

- a. How many dispersal orders were authorised in your area during 2020–2024?
- b. If available, for what general reasons were they used (e.g. youth ASB, rough sleeping, begging, protests, peaceful social/community gatherings, bird feeding, loitering, drug use, sex work, gatherings outside abortion clinics)?
- c. How many breaches of Dispersal Orders resulted in prosecution or further enforcement?
- d. If available, disaggregated data on race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and disability status for Dispersal Orders issued in this period.

If possible, please also briefly outline how this data is typically stored and retained (e.g. database system, format, retention period).

I am happy to receive the response in spreadsheet or plain text format.

We received your request on 12/08/2025 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 time period requested, there have been in excess of 900 dispersal orders authorised. In order to determine the reasons they were used, the record for each dispersal order 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 5 minutes to review each record to answer this request, this would equate to over 75 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, in order to comply with this obligation please see below.

If question b was withdrawn and if the remaining questions were amended, Staffordshire Police would be able to provide the following:

- Dispersal powers (Dispersal Orders). (Under S34 of the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014). The number of times a geographical order has been put in place between 2020-2024. Please note this is not the number of persons removed.
- The number of arrests for the offence of 'Fail to comply with a section 35 direction excluding a person from an area' between 2020-2024, broken down by outcome.

Please note that we cannot provide personal data such as age and gender for dispersal orders as the data we capture is in relation to geographical orders being put in place and therefore demographic data on individuals is not held.

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:

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