

6 August 2026

FOI Ref 22951

Request - You asked Staffordshire Police (SP) the following:

I am writing to submit a formal request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I am a researcher with *****. We are currently developing a documentary podcast series examining the 1980 murder of *****. The project is being produced by*****, and our goal is to build an accurate, respectful historical record of the investigation and the subsequent 1981 trial at Stafford Crown Court.

As part of our background research, I recently contacted Forensic Archive Ltd (FAL) to establish what files still survive. They have confirmed that they hold relevant historical Forensic Science Service (FSS) records on behalf of Staffordshire Police, but advised that any request for access must be authorized and processed directly through your force.

I would be grateful if you could review and disclose the following specific records held under your authority at FAL:

*FSS Reference *****: The hard copy case file and electronic microfiche records (FAL noted this includes bite-mark photographs, as well as blood grouping and fibre analysis documentation).

*FSS Reference *****: The electronic copy of the microfiche record.

Given that 46 years have passed since the trial, we hope that the age of these files allows for their release to support our historical research. If full disclosure is not possible, I would appreciate the release of any redacted or partial summaries that can be provided. Thank you very much for your time and assistance.

SP received your request on 03/06/2026 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

SP'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 14(1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the request is vexatious.

SP are not providing the information you have requested as SP have determined that your request is vexatious under Section 14(1) Vexatious Requests.

The Information Commissioner's guidance on the subject makes it clear that Section 14(1) may be applied where a request, or its impact on a public authority, cannot be justified.

The key question to consider is whether the request is likely to cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption, irritation or distress based on the impact of the authority, weighed against any evidence about the purpose and value of the request. SP are also entitled to consider the context and history of the request where it is relevant.

SP is treating this request as vexatious because to provide the requested data will cause an unjustified and disproportionate burden on the force. There are in excess of 300 pages of documents relating to the specific reference numbers for this case which would need to be read, evaluated and redacted and then, to ensure that there would be no data breach, each of the documents would need to be checked by a separate staff member. To conduct this work would prove a significant burden on the department.

For the above reasons, SP have concluded that your request is vexatious within the terms of Section 14(1) of the Act and SP will not therefore be providing the information requested.

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 SP, 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.



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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