

14 August 2026

FOI Ref 23159

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

For the period 1 January 2018 to 1 June 2026:

The total number of arrests recorded by your force in connection with football matches or football-related events.

Of these, how many involved individuals were aged under 18 at the time of arrest.

Where available, please provide an annual (calendar year) breakdown of the under-18 arrests.

If the type of offence is included in your data (e.g. public order, violence, possession of pyrotechnics), please also include this information.

For the purposes of this request, 'football-related' refers to arrests recorded by the force as connected to a football match, football event, football policing operation, football banning order matter, or otherwise classified as football-related within police records.

If any part of this request exceeds the cost limit under Section 12 of the Act, I would be grateful if you could provide any information that is available within the limit and advise how the request might be refined.

SP received your request on 21/07/2026 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 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 SP can readily retrieve information from local police systems to answer this request. For the period requested, it would take a significant amount of time to collate the information.

There are 4 main football clubs in Staffordshire, plus lower league clubs that SP also police on occasions.

Each of the four clubs would have 23 home fixtures a season plus pre-season friendly fixtures as well as cup competitions. Thus, an average of 28 home games preseason. This over the period requested is approximately 896 games. Additionally, SP will have policed football events such as public order operations over the force area for international competitions, these being World Cup Russia 2018, Euro 2020 (UK), World Cup 2022 Qatar, Euro 2024 Germany.

There is no specific football offense therefore, searches would need to be conducted for other offences such as public order and violence at named locations such as football stadium/grounds. Also searches for any incidents of disturbance, that officers were deployed to such as, a public house, sports club or domestic dwelling or even a domestic incident, which would then require the record to be manually reviewed to ascertain if an arrest was made, the reason for the arrest and the age of the person arrested. This would require very labour-intensive manual trawls through a vast number of records.

From dip sampling, it has been estimated that it would take approximately 5 minutes to review each record to answer this request. For example, assuming 1 person is arrested at each match played by the main four main clubs only, this would equate to over 70 hours just to review. And this only represents a portion of the research that would be required as detailed above. Thus, to achieve this task would therefore exceed the 18-hour time and cost threshold of the Freedom of Information Act by a considerable margin.

Advice and assistance

Section 16 of the Act places an obligation upon the Authority to provide advice and assistance, to comply with this obligation please see below.

Unfortunately, SP cannot suggest a way in which your request could be simplified or pared down to bring it within the confines of the time and cost threshold.

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:



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

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, 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