

20 August 2026

FOI Ref 23208

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

For the period 1 January 2022 to the date this request is processed:

Has your force received any correspondence, legal letters, pre-action protocol letters, threatened legal claims, judicial review correspondence, complaints from solicitors, or other formal legal representations from:

Alliance Defending Freedom UK (ADF UK)

Alliance Defending Freedom International (ADF International)

Lawyers, solicitors or counsel acting on behalf of either organisation

relating to:

abortion clinic "buffer zones" or safe access zones;

public spaces protection orders restricting activity around abortion facilities;

alleged silent prayer incidents;

offers of conversation, support or assistance near abortion facilities; or

the policing of protests, vigils or other activity connected with abortion services.

If yes, please provide:

the date(s) of the correspondence;

the name of the organisation or legal representative sending it;

a brief description of the matter;

whether the matter related to a specific individual; and

the outcome (for example: no action taken, complaint resolved, policy review, settlement, court proceedings, judicial review, ongoing matter, etc.).

Please provide copies of:

correspondence received from ADF UK, ADF International, or legal representatives acting on their behalf – including any original legal letters sent to the force

correspondence sent by the force in response;

legal letters before claim;

internal briefing notes prepared in response to such correspondence;

records of meetings or communications between the force and ADF UK/ADF International concerning these matters; and

any final outcome letters, settlement agreements (with personal information redacted as necessary), court judgments, or formal decisions arising from such matters.

Please provide the number of cases, incidents, complaints, legal claims or threatened claims involving ADF UK or ADF International concerning the subjects listed above.

Where any exemption is relied upon, please provide all reasonably segregable material and explain which exemption has been applied to the withheld information.

I am content for personal data to be redacted pursuant to section 40 FOIA.

SP received your request on 01/08/2026 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

SP's response to your enquiry is as follows:

SP can neither confirm nor deny whether 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 exemptions:

In accordance with Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, this letter represents a refusal notice for this request.

- 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 SP, 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.

- Section 31(3) Law Enforcement

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

There is significant sensitivity and highly emotive engagement from both pro- and anti-abortion activists around the work at such facilities, and confirming or denying if such information is held, provides both sides with policing procedures that can be used for criminal activity against individuals and organisations whose beliefs differ from their own. Whilst the level of criminality may be considered to be of a lesser level than say, that of organised crime, by confirming or denying the information is held, puts members of the public, be it individuals demonstrating outside the facilities, individuals needing the service, employees, general members of the public in the vicinity or the infrastructure itself, in direct harm of criminal behaviour.

Even where no information is held, confirmation of that fact would be informative. Responses from individual police forces could be compared and aggregated with other information already available in the public domain, allowing highly motivated interested parties, both nationally and internationally, to build a broader picture of policing capabilities, vulnerabilities and security arrangements across the United Kingdom. This mosaic effect could enable those intent on disrupting policing activity, evading detection, gathering intelligence on law enforcement capabilities, or exploiting perceived weaknesses in safeguarding and protective measures around the facilities to make more informed decisions. Such outcomes would be likely to prejudice the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension or prosecution of offenders and the maintenance of public safety.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring confirmation or denial

There is public interest in promoting openness and transparency regarding policing activities and their relationships with external organisations and individuals. Confirming or denying whether information is held would assist public understanding of how policing protects its information and operational environments and would facilitate scrutiny of decisions concerning the engagement with external organisations and individuals. Disclosure would also contribute to public confidence by demonstrating accountability and unbiased engagement in relation to policing of the activities outside the facilities of interest.

Factors favouring neither confirming nor denying

There is significant public interest in protecting the ability of the police service to prevent and detect crime and to apprehend offenders. Confirming or denying whether information is held would reveal information about policing capabilities, security arrangements and operational resilience. Confirmation or denial could assist criminal action, frustrate police activity, obtain intelligence about policing capabilities, safeguarding or protective measures, or exploit perceived gaps in security arrangements in and around the facilities. There is a strong public interest in ensuring that policing tactics, capabilities and protective security measures remain effective and are not undermined through incremental disclosures.

Balance Test

Whilst SP recognises the public interest in openness, transparency and accountability, greater weight must be afforded to the significant public interest in protecting interested parties and the effectiveness of law enforcement. Confirming or denying whether information is held would reveal information about policing's protective and safeguarding arrangements, operational resilience, and security capabilities. Such information, when combined with material already in the public domain or information obtained from other police forces, could assist those seeking to identify vulnerabilities, evade detection, frustrate policing activity, or undermine measures designed to protect members of the public in and around these facilities.

SP therefore considers that the potential prejudice arising from confirmation or denial would outweigh the benefits of increased transparency and, accordingly, the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the neither confirm nor deny position under Section 31(3) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

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 SP 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 twenty working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to forty 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