

11 August 2026

FOI Ref 23218

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

For the period 1 June 2025 to 30 June 2026 inclusive, please provide the following information from all data force wide.

Please electronically search crime-report text fields for the terms:

“balaclava”

“bally”

“face covering”

Please provide:

- The number of unique crime reports containing one or more of these terms.
- A breakdown of these reports by the most commonly recorded offence type.
- The age group of suspects linked to these reports, broken down as:
 - under 18;
 - 18–24;
 - 25 and over;
 - age unknown or not recorded.
- The number of these reports that resulted in:
 - an arrest;
 - a charge;
 - no further action.
- The number of occasions during the same period where a balaclava, “bally” or face covering was recorded as seized or recovered by officers, with a breakdown by associated offence type.

I am requesting aggregate figures only. I do not require personal data, crime reference numbers, incident narratives, or a manual review of records.

If any part of the request would exceed the cost limit, please prioritise questions 1–3 and provide advice on how the remaining request could be refined.

SP received your request on 03/08/2026 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

SP’s response to your enquiry is as follows:

SP holds the requested information.

- For the period 1 June 2025 to 30 June 2026 inclusive, please provide the following information from all data force wide.



- Please electronically search crime-report text fields for the terms:
“balaclava”
“bally”
“face covering”
- Please provide:
 - The number of unique crime reports containing one or more of these terms.
 - A breakdown of these reports by the most commonly recorded offence type.
 - The age group of suspects linked to these reports, broken down as:
 - under 18;
 - 18–24;
 - 25 and over;
 - age unknown or not recorded.
- - The number of these reports that resulted in:
 - an arrest;
 - a charge;
 - no further action.
- - The number of occasions during the same period where a balaclava, “bally” or face covering was recorded as seized or recovered by officers, with a breakdown by associated offence type.
 - **Disclosed, please see the accompanying file titled ‘FOI 23218 Balaclava Crimes Data’.**

Please note that there are a number of offences that are still being investigated so with regard to these cases SP are citing Section 30(1)(a)(b) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Investigations conducted by Public Authorities. These have been included in the overall total but have been removed from any further breakdown.

Please note;

- that not every offence will have a suspect/offender identified.
- that there are other outcomes other than charged and no further action which have not been included as these have not been requested.
- this data was obtained by completing a summary search for the terms “balaclava”, “bally” and “face covering”. The accuracy and reliability of these searches cannot be guaranteed as only the MO / summary field of the report is searched. If this term is mentioned elsewhere (i.e. within the call log, crime report, statements etc) these will not be returned in the results. Additionally, if the term is misspelt within the MO / summary field, this will not be returned. To provide accurate results would require manually interrogating each crime within the specified timeframe to establish its relevance to your request.
- that these figures have been provided to the best of the ability of SP, subject to the limitation of current recording protocols and systems/software. Additional offences may have been recorded during these timescales but are awaiting finalisation and input onto these systems and would not be present within this dataset.

Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that data is extracted from multiple sources, developed for specific policing purposes, for which data extraction methods have not been specifically designed to directly correlate with the terminology of this request. Therefore, the data presented is subject to the inaccuracies and idiosyncrasies inherent in any large-scale recording system.

As a consequence, care should be taken in the interpretation and presentation of this data, so as to not misrepresent the whole or any part of the data disclosed.

All Freedom of Information request responses are published on the SP website although personal details are not included.

The following exemption has been applied:

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

- Section 30(1)(a)(b) – Criminal Investigations
- Section 30 is qualified and class based and, as such, we are required to apply the public interest test.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 30(1)(a)(b)

Disclosure of the information would improve the public's knowledge and understanding of the investigatory process and, as all police investigations are publicly funded, would show how public funds are being spent.

Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 30(1)(a)(b)

Disclosure of the requested information would prejudice how investigations are carried out in the future. SP is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities SP serves. Any release of information relating to ongoing investigations could prejudice and undermine those investigations. The prevention and detection of such matters could therefore be hindered and therefore risk interference with evidence, which could have detrimental impact on future investigations. In addition, the right to a fair trial could be undermined.

Balance test

Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act is a release of information to the world in general and not an individual applicant. Having considered the public interest factors SP are required to determine whether on balance the factors favouring disclosure outweigh those which are against disclosure. It is SP's view that the factors favouring disclosure do not outweigh those which favour non-disclosure.

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:



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

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