

17 February 2026

FOI Ref 22456

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

I am writing to request the following information relating to your force's spending on informants

1. The total amount of money your force has spent on informants or Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) in each of the past two years (please use the two last full reporting years, whether this is calendar, financial or another period).
2. The amount of money that was spent on informants in protest or activist groups
3. The amount of this that was spent on informants in a) far right groups b) pro-Palestine groups and c) environmental groups

SP received your request on 29/01/2026 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

SP's response to your enquiry is as follows:

SP holds some of the requested information.

- I am writing to request the following information relating to your force's spending on informants
- 1. The total amount of money your force has spent on informants or Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) in each of the past two years (please use the two last full reporting years, whether this is calendar, financial or another period). – **Partially disclosed, please see the accompanying file titled 'FOI 22456 Informant Spending Data'. Neither confirm nor deny in relation to any other data held, please see the below exemptions.**
- 2. The amount of money that was spent on informants in protest or activist groups – **Neither confirm nor deny, please see the below exemptions.**
- 3. The amount of this that was spent on informants in a) far right groups b) pro-Palestine groups and c) environmental groups – **Neither confirm nor deny, please see the below exemptions.**

Staffordshire Police can neither confirm nor deny whether information relevant to parts of 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:

The following exemptions have been applied:

- Section 23(5) Information Supplied By Or Concerning Certain Security Bodies
Section 23(5) provides an exemption from the duty to confirm or deny whether information is held if doing so would involve the disclosure of any information (whether or not already recorded) which was directly or indirectly supplied by, or relates to, any of the bodies specified in subsection (3).

- Section 24(2) National Security

Section 24(2) provides an exemption from the duty to confirm or deny whether information is held, where the exemption is required for the purposes of safeguarding national security.

- Section 30(3) Investigations

The duty to confirm or deny does not arise in relation to information which is (or if it were held by the public authority would be) exempt information by virtue of subsection (1) or (2).

- Section 31(3) Law Enforcement

The duty to confirm or deny does not arise if, or to the extent that, compliance with section 1 (1)(a) would, or would be likely to, prejudice any of the matters mentioned in subsection (1).

- 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 Staffordshire Police, 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.

Harm:

There is considerable harm attributed to the confirmation or denial that any other information is held in relation to police confidential sources. Such information would not exist had Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) not been required to participate in the effective investigation of criminal matters. The information would only be held if it were obtained and recorded by the force for the purpose of its functions in relation to criminal investigations.

Any disclosure such as in this request that may reduce the flow of information to the Police Service and intelligence agencies would have a substantial prejudicial impact on the ability of such authorities to collect reliable and accurate intelligence. Furthermore, law enforcement bodies would become dependent on more costly and time consuming methods of collecting intelligence. Whilst it may not be seen by the public to be wholly acceptable to offer payments to individuals who are close to criminal activity, CHIS are often the most valuable sources of information and enable the police and other agencies to secure evidence and subsequent prosecutions.

Covert Human Intelligence Sources (regardless of their motivation) provide information at particular personal risk to themselves and their families. As previous cases have shown, where a CHIS is identified it can result in substantial physical harm, or mental trauma resulting from the threat of physical harm. This

problem is particularly acute in cases relating to serious crime and terrorism where the threat against individuals is substantial.

The use of CHIS is regulated by the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act which requires authorities to take into account the provisions of the Human Rights Act when using CHIS (and other covert techniques). Police forces are reminded of their obligation under Article 2 of the Human Rights Act which requires them to protect human life. This is further supported by a High Court hearing *Van Colle v Chief Constable Hertfordshire Police*. In this case the force concerned failed to provide adequate protection to an individual whose life was at risk because of the criminal acts of a third party. The witness was murdered by a person whom he was about to give evidence against in a criminal trial.

Those determined to identify informants have the ability to use small pieces of information in order to build a more complete picture and it is the cumulative effect of information disclosures that the Police Service feel will lead to this prejudice being realised.

Covert Human Intelligence Sources (regardless of their motivation) provide information at particular personal risk to themselves and their families. As previous cases have shown, where a CHIS is identified it can result in substantial physical harm, or mental trauma resulting from the threat of physical harm. This problem is particularly acute in cases relating to serious crime and terrorism where the threat against individuals is substantial. To confirm or deny any additional information would place those individual(s), if any, at an increased risk from danger as detailed above.

It may be viewed by those not involved in the management of informants that a statistical number in itself is unlikely to cause any such adverse effects. However, the subject has to be viewed more holistically. Those determined to identify informants have the ability to use small pieces of information in order to build a more complete picture and it is the cumulative effect of information disclosures that the Police Service feel will lead to this prejudice being realised.

Disclosure of informants data could impact on the recruitment and retention of CHIS in general, due to the perception of (rather than the actual) risk of identification. The disclosure of the requested information would damage national security through discouraging current national security CHIS from cooperating with the police service in other geographical areas, or preventing the recruitment of national security CHIS in the future – regardless of whether the area in question actually currently runs CHIS reporting on serious crime, terrorist or other threats.

Public Interest Test

Factors Favouring Confirmation or Denial – Section 24(2)

Confirmation or denial that any other information exists relevant to the request would lead to a better informed public and the public are entitled to know how public funds are spent. The information simply relates to national security and disclosure would not actually harm it.

Factors Against Confirmation or Denial - Section 24(2)

Other organisations outside the police service are also widely engaged in rewarding informants in a number of ways, and therefore by confirming or denying that any other information exists relevant to the request would harm the close relationship that exists with such organisations, where trust and confidence

in this specific area has been built up in the exchange of information and financial assistance during the Criminal Justice process.

To confirm or deny whether Staffordshire Police hold any additional information would allow inferences to be made about the nature and extent of national security related activities which may or may not take place in a given area. This could enable terrorist groups to take steps to avoid detection, and as such, confirmation or denial would be damaging to national security.

By confirming or denying any policing arrangements of this nature would render national security measures less effective. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or infra-structure of the UK and increase the risk of harm to the public.

Factors Favouring Confirmation or Denial - Section 30(3)

The confirmation or denial that information is held would provide a greater insight into policing and how resources are allocated to investigate crimes. The confirmation or denial that any other information is or is not held would identify how often Staffordshire Police relies on CHIS within this type of investigation.

Factors Against Confirmation or Denial - Section 30(3)

To confirm or deny that any other information relevant to this request is held would provide details of any previous or on-going investigations. Informant's information assists police investigations and provides vital intelligence. To confirm that Staffordshire Police have used informants with previous investigations and criminal convictions in specific investigations would provide sensitive information that would undermine policing and investigations. Investigations, although complete, may have included information from an informant of the type described and serve to undermine any investigations that have taken place based on the original investigation.

Factors Favouring Confirmation or Denial - Section 31(3)

Confirming or denying whether Staffordshire Police holds information relevant to this request the public would see where public funds have been spent and allow the Police service to appear more open and transparent. Staffordshire Police is committed to openness and transparency with the general public. When a request for information is made, it is correct that the police make appropriate information available to the general public. The provision of information, through confirming or denying whether information relevant to this request is held would accordingly, reinforce our commitment to be an open and transparent organisation.

Factors Against Confirmation or Denial - Section 31(3)

By confirming or denying whether information is held could compromise law enforcement tactics which would hinder the prevention and detection of crime and impact on police resources which may need to be increased to reassure the public and protect the surrounding community. This would result in more risk to the public and consequently require the use of more police resources.

Balance Test:

The Police Service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing, and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. The security and maintenance of investigations are of paramount importance and the Police service will not divulge whether information is or is not held if to do so would place the safety of an individual at risk or undermine National Security and investigations. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations and providing assurance that the police service is appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat from criminals, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding both national security and the integrity of police investigations and operations in this highly sensitive area. As much as there is public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced in matters of national security, this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances.

It is therefore our opinion that for these issues the balancing test for confirming or not that information is held, is not made out.

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 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