

24 February 2026

FOI Ref 22548

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

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I request the following information for the period 1 January 2023 to present:

1. The number of reported thefts of xylazine and/or medetomidine from veterinary practices, veterinary hospitals, agricultural suppliers, or veterinary pharmaceutical suppliers in your force area.
2. The total quantity (in ml, mg, or number of vials/bottles) of xylazine and/or medetomidine reported stolen in each incident.
3. Any intelligence assessments or reports produced by your force concerning the diversion of veterinary sedatives (xylazine, medetomidine, or other veterinary tranquilizers) into illicit drug markets.
4. The number of arrests made in connection with theft of veterinary sedatives (xylazine, medetomidine) where the suspected motive was diversion to illicit drug supply.
5. Any drug seizures where xylazine and/or medetomidine were detected in substances sold as illicit drugs (heroin, benzodiazepines, opioids, etc.).

If you do not hold this information, please confirm this in writing.

SP received your request on 18/02/2026 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 our systems to answer parts of this request. For the time period requested, there have been in excess of 44,600 theft occurrences, in order to ascertain whether the item stolen was 'xylazine and/or medetomidine' the record for each offence would require a manual review. Additionally, although there is a location premises subtype category, this is not a compulsory field to complete and therefore contains a lot of blank fields. Each one again would need to be manually checked to establish whether the theft occurred at 'veterinary practices, veterinary hospitals, agricultural suppliers, or veterinary pharmaceutical suppliers'. To extract this data would therefore require a very labour-intensive manual trawl through each record.

From dip sampling, it has been estimated that it would take approximately 3 minutes to review each record to answer this request, this would equate to over 2,230 hours. To achieve this task would therefore exceed the 18-hour time and cost threshold of the FOI 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.

In order to refine your request, data can be provided for questions 1, 2 and 4 whereby the location premises subtype field has been completed as 'Vets surgery' in the time period requested. However please be advised that there may be other offences that fit the criteria of this request whereby 'Vets surgery' has not been chosen. Data can also be provided for question 5 in full. We do not hold any information in relation to question 3.

Please be advised that 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.

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