

27 February 2026

FOI Ref 22593

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

I would like to request information held by your police force relating to recorded crime cases where a suspect was identified, but no prosecution or formal disposal took place because the statutory time limit for prosecution expired. For example, the six-month time limit for summary-only offences or other applicable prosecution or custody time limits.

Specifically, please provide the following for each of the last five full calendar years:

1. The number of recorded crime cases where a suspect was identified and the case was closed, finalised, or resulted in no further action because the prosecution time limit expired before charge, caution, or other disposal
2. A breakdown of these cases by the recorded reason for expiry or delay, for example (but not limited to): failure to complete a suspect interview before the time limit administrative or case-handling delay staff availability or resourcing issues, including sickness or workload evidential delays other recorded reasons

If your police force does not record a single explicit category for "prosecution time limit expired", please provide the closest equivalent data held. For example, cases flagged as "time-barred", "out of time", or similar.

SP received your request on 25/02/2026 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 question 2 of this request. For the time period requested, there have been in excess of 1000 occurrences with the outcome recorded as 'Suspect identified but prosecution time limit expired'. In order to ascertain the reason for the expiry, the record for each offence would require a manual review. 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 50 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 question 1 broken down by year if question 2 was removed.

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.



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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