

13 January 2026

FOI Ref 22336

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

Please provide information on the number of arrests and charges under the Terrorism Act 2000 against members of Palestine Action carried out by your force in 2025, separated into before and after the date of their proscription (5th July 2025). Please do not include people charged under section 13 of the Terrorism Act for holding placards or similar, but only those arrested as members of Palestine Action taking direct action, i.e. not under other sections of the Terrorism Act. It is in the public interest to understand the effects of proscription.

Clarification received on 09/01/2026

For clarity, I am requesting information on arrests and charges under all sections of the Terrorism Act except not section 13. Hopefully this is sufficiently clear, and as you say there is no statutory definition of "direct action", so we can dispense with those words for this FOI request.

SP received your request on 08/01/2026 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 24(2) National Security

Section 24 is a qualified exemption and as such there is a requirement to articulate the harm and conduct a test of the public interest.

- Section 31(3) Law Enforcement

Section 31 is a qualified and prejudice-based exemption and, as such, we are required to evidence the harm in disclosure and apply the public interest test.

- 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.

Harm:

Confirming or denying whether SP holds any information relevant to this request would risk providing an advantage to individuals seeking to undermine policing strategies, particularly those designed to safeguard national security. Disclosure under FOIA constitutes a release to the public at large; therefore, any acknowledgement of information held could be misused, potentially compromising sensitive operations. Furthermore, confirmation or denial could, through process of elimination, assist those intent on disrupting police activity by enabling them to infer whether specific individuals have been subject to investigative tactics or surveillance.

Any information identifying the focus of policing activity could be exploited by terrorists, extremists, or criminal organisations. Whether information is or is not held, disclosure would adversely affect public safety and compromise both national security and law enforcement.

Confirming or denying the existence of information would be highly advantageous to individuals engaged in criminal activity, as it could reveal which persons or organisations are subject to police monitoring, allowing them to infer whether they have evaded detection. Such disclosure could also facilitate “mosaic requests,” enabling malicious actors to piece together a broader picture of law enforcement interest and surveillance targets. Ultimately, this would undermine the effectiveness of police operations and compromise the ability to protect national security.

The prevention and detection of crime is fundamental to policing, and the threat from terrorism remains significant. The UK faces an ongoing risk from violent extremists, with the current national threat level set at “substantial”, meaning a terrorist attack is likely. In light of these circumstances, confirming or denying whether SP holds any relevant information would be counterproductive to safeguarding national security and could increase the risk of crime if a consistent NCND approach is not maintained.

FOIA is considered a release to the world; once published, SP has no control over how the information is used. While the applicant’s motives are not questioned, such information could assist those seeking to disrupt police investigations by enabling them to identify the level of policing activity and tactics employed. This could necessitate a full review of police methods, increasing costs to the public purse. These investigative tools have been tried and tested over many years and remain largely unchanged.

Confirming or denying whether information is held may therefore compromise the efficiency of policing services and our duty of care to the public, as well as negatively impact ongoing investigations.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring confirmation or denial for Section 24

Confirming or denying whether the requested information is held could promote transparency regarding national security arrangements. It would allow the public to understand how resources are allocated and provide reassurance that appropriate measures are in place to protect the country. This openness could strengthen public confidence in the effectiveness of security strategies.

Factors against confirmation or denial for Section 24

Disclosure of any policing arrangements of this nature would render security measures less effective. Confirming or denying the existence of information could compromise ongoing or future operations designed to protect the UK's infrastructure and public safety. This would increase the risk of harm to the public and necessitate a full review of security measures, incurring additional costs to the public purse.

Factors favouring confirmation or denial for Section 31

Confirming or denying whether SP holds the requested information could demonstrate accountability and openness in policing operations. It would reinforce public confidence in the police service and its commitment to transparency, ensuring that the public understands how law enforcement engages with its responsibilities and allocates resources.

Factors against confirmation or denial for Section 31

Confirming or denying whether SP holds records relating to specific individuals or groups could compromise law enforcement tactics, hindering the prevention and detection of crime. Many policing strategies are reused and have previously been observed by criminal groups, fixated individuals, and terrorist organisations. Exposure of these methods would necessitate costly revisions and weaken operational effectiveness. Criminal groups could exploit disclosed information, directly impacting SP resources and public safety. Furthermore, disclosure risks undermining collaborative law enforcement efforts, which are essential for managing complex and sensitive investigations.

Balance Test

The security of the country is paramount. SP will not confirm or deny whether information is held if doing so would undermine national security, law enforcement functions, or investigative processes. While transparency is important, the public interest in safeguarding the integrity of police operations and investigations in this sensitive area is significantly stronger.

Confirming or denying the existence of information could enable interested parties to gain insight into investigative strategies, jeopardising operations and potentially causing harm. Any disclosure that risks prejudicing law enforcement is therefore not in the public interest.

Accordingly, after weighing the competing interests, confirmation or denial of whether SP holds information relating to this request would not be in the public interest. This should not be taken as indicating whether such information exists.

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/>



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Freedom of Information
Information Access Team

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