

28 January 2026

FOI Ref 22419

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

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I am looking into the prevalence of violence at semi professional and amateur football matches. This would cover matches from step 6 (Conference South/North) down to regional divisions, and amateur leagues.

I would like to request data relating to recorded incidents at football matches hosted within your force area, for the years 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

I would be grateful if you could provide:

The number of recorded incidents at football grounds/parks/pitches on match days classified as:

Assault (including common assault and ABH/GBH)

Public order offences

Violent disorder

Any other violence-related offences

I'd also like to please be provided with:

The number of arrests made in connection with semi-pro/amateur football matches in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 (with the figures provided separately for each year)

Where possible, a breakdown of:

How many of the incidents involved players (rather than spectators, for example), and how many involved match officials.

Where the incidents took place and any details of exactly what happened (but only if this is possible)

SP received your request on 19/01/2026 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 this request. For the time period requested, there have been in excess of 77,000 violence and public order incidents, and over 74,000 arrests recorded occurrences. In order to determine whether the incident or arrest was in connection with semi-pro/amateur football matches, the record for each incident and arrest would require a manual review. Further review would also be required to determine whether the incident involved players or match officials, and to retrieve the details of the incident/arrest. 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 7,550 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.

Unfortunately, SP cannot suggest a way in which your request could be simplified or pared down to bring it within the confines of the time and cost threshold.

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:



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

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