



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

22 July 2026

FOI Ref 23090

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

On 1 April 2009, a Met Police officer struck, what would be, a fatal blow to a newspaper vendor, Ian Tomlinson, during a G20 protest <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10728685>. An inquest jury concluded that a police officer unlawfully killed Mr Tomlinson.

Deaths in police custody

I am making this request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

All deaths in police custody are referred to the coroner under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and to the IOPC under the Police Reform Act 2002. These referrals are statutory. Information provided under statutory compulsion cannot be confidential in the **section 41** sense. UK GDPR and **section 40** do not apply to deceased persons.

Please answer each question separately.

Deaths in custody – annual totals

For each of the following periods:

- 1 January 2020–31 December 2020
- 1 January 2021–31 December 2021
- 1 January 2022–31 December 2022
- 1 January 2023–31 December 2023
- 1 January 2024–31 December 2024
- 1 January 2025–31 December 2025
- 1 January 2026–30 June 2026
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Please provide the number of deaths :

- In police custody.
- During arrest or restraint.
- Following police contact where the incident meets the IOPC definition of a death in custody.

Demographic data – ethnicity, age and gender

For each death recorded in the periods above, please provide :

- Ethnicity (IC codes, 18+1, or ONS categories – whichever your force records).
- Age at death.
- Gender,

This is operational data created by the force. It is not confidential and does not engage section 40 or section 41.

Circumstances of death

For each case, please provide:

- Location type (custody suite, police vehicle, public place, hospital after police contact).
- Cause-of-death category as recorded by the force.
- Whether force was used; if yes, the type of force e.g., taser, restraint, riot shield.



- Whether mental health was recorded as a factor.
- I am not requesting medical records or confidential clinical information.

Coroner information

For each death, please provide:

- The date the force referred the death to the coroner
- a list of categories of documents supplied to the coroner (for example, custody record, CCTV, officer statements, risk assessments)
- The inquest status (open, concluded, or pending)
- The inquest conclusion, if known to the force

Information supplied to the coroner is provided under statutory compulsion. Section 41 does not apply.

IOPC referral and investigation data

For each death, please provide

- The date of referral to the IOPC.
- The referral category (mandatory, independent, managed, supervised).
- The mode of investigation (independent, managed, supervised, local).
- A summary of IOPC findings held by the force (please provide the IOPC report or a verifiable and working link to that report).
- Whether any officer faced misconduct or gross misconduct proceedings and the outcome.
- Any learning recommendations issued.
- Whether the force implemented those recommendations.

IOPC referrals and investigations are statutory. Section 41 cannot apply.

Ethnicity recording systems

Please provide

- How the force records ethnicity (self-defined, officer-defined, or both).
- Any changes in ethnicity recording practices between 2020 and 2026.

Definitions and retention

Please provide

The force's working definition of "death in custody". The retention period for custody-related death records.

Exemptions

If you believe any exemption applies,

- Identify the precise statutory exemption.
- Provide full reasoning where a public interest test is required – and the qualified person who made that decision.
- Disclose all non-exempt information.

Please note

- Section 40 does not apply to deceased persons.
- Section 41 cannot apply to information provided under statutory compulsion to the coroner or IOPC.
- Section 12 should not apply because the requested information exists in structured form for statutory reporting. And even if you were to trawl manually, they are so few in number that it will not take you beyond the statutory 18-hours/£450.

Clarification received on 16/07/2026:

To assist your team with the search, we require data for all deaths following police contact. Please provide the total figures broken down by the five official College of Policing categories. Please ensure you make these categories clear.

- **Category 1:** Road traffic fatalities (arising from police pursuits, responses, and traffic-related activity).
- **Category 2:** Fatal shootings (where police officers fired the fatal shot).
- **Category 3:** Deaths in or following police custody (including during arrest, detention, transfer, or detention under the Mental Health Act).
- **Category 4:** Apparent suicides following release from custody.
- **Category 5:** Deaths during or following other types of contact with the police (which were subject to an independent investigation by the IOPC).

By presenting the data using these five distinct categories within your Excel spreadsheet, you will ensure the response remains accurate and aligns perfectly with your internal reporting standards.

SP received your request on 06/07/2026 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 local police systems to answer the entirety of this request. Prior to 2024, the data is not in a format which can be extracted within the 18 hour time limit as stipulated by the Act. This is because the data is held across multiple folders and systems. Prior to 2024, there are 227 death or serious injury cases following or during police contact that would each need to be manually reviewed in order to retrieve the data requested.

Furthermore, from 2024 - June 2026, a manual trawl of each record would be required to establish the circumstances of death, the coroner information and IPOC referral and investigation data. This is because this information is held within multiple files and systems and would therefore require manual retrieval.

From dip sampling, it has been estimated that it would take approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour to review each record to answer this request, this would equate to between 113 and 227 hours for the data prior to 2024 alone. Further time would also be required to retrieve all of the data requested for the period 2024 – June 2026, this is estimated to take at least 30 minutes per record. This would equate to an additional 27

hours. To achieve this task would therefore exceed the 18-hour time and cost threshold of the Freedom of Information 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.

If your request was refined, SP would be able to provide the following:

1. The total number of deaths in custody between 2024 and June 2026, broken down by the five official College of Policing categories.
2. The total number of deaths in custody between 2024 and June 2026, broken down by ethnicity, age group and gender.
3. The date each death in custody was brought to the attention of the IOPC between 2024 and June 2026.
4. Ethnicity recording systems:
 - How the force records ethnicity
 - Any changes in ethnicity recording practices between 2020 and 2026.

Please be advised that SP follow the NPCC Retention Schedule for the retention period for custody-related death records.

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