

17 July 2026

FOI Ref 23127

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

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

For all arrests recorded under Section 1 of the Malicious Communications Act 1988 between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2025 (inclusive), please provide a breakdown of those arrests by the recorded communication method or medium used in the alleged offence.

For example, where recorded, this might include categories such as:

Social media post

Social media message

Email

Text message (SMS)

Instant messaging application

Telephone call

Letter

Parcel

Other physical article

Any other equivalent categories recorded on your system

Please use the categories exactly as they are recorded in your crime recording or custody system. I am not requesting that records be manually reviewed or reclassified into new categories.

If your systems do not contain a searchable field recording the communication method, or if no such information is held, please confirm this.

If only part of the requested information can be provided within the appropriate cost limit under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act, I would be grateful if you could provide the information that can be extracted electronically, together with advice and assistance under section 16 as to how the request might be refined to obtain any remaining information.

If any part of this request is refused, please specify the exemption(s) relied upon and explain why they apply.

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to your response within the statutory time limit.

SP received your request on 14/07/2026 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 this request. For the period requested, there have been in excess of 200 arrests recorded under Section 1 of the Malicious Communications Act 1988. To ascertain communication method or medium used, the record for each arrest 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 8 minutes to review each record to answer this request, this would equate to over 26 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.

Please note, we do not record arrests by the method of communication (such as social media post). Instead, arrests are recorded based on the reason description provided at the time of arrest. Therefore, in order to assist in refining your request, data could be provided where the arrest reason has been recorded as 'Send communication / article of an indecent / offensive nature', 'Send letter / communication / article conveying a threatening message' and 'Send letter / communication / article conveying indecent / offensive message' broken down by year. Furthermore, a manual trawl could be conducted for 2025 to determine the type of communication used where recorded. However further exemptions may apply.

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



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

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