

27 March 2026

FOI Ref 22594

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

Please treat this as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
For the purposes of this request, "police informants" means Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) and/or any equivalent term used by your force for human sources.
Please provide the following information for each of the financial years 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25:
The total amount (in £) paid by the force that relates to CHIS, including (where held) rewards/payments, reimbursements/expenses and any other direct payments made to or for the benefit of CHIS.
If held and reasonably retrievable within the appropriate cost limit, a breakdown for each year showing (a) rewards/payments versus expenses/reimbursements, and (b) payments made by cash versus payments made by bank transfer/other method.
The number of CHIS registered during each year (an end-of-year figure is fine if that is what you hold), and the number of CHIS who received any payment in each year.
The highest single payment made to one CHIS in each year (amount only).
Copies of any current policy or guidance documents that cover CHIS payments and/or CHIS expenses (including authorisation levels), and any description of the audit/assurance process for CHIS payments (for example internal audit arrangements or finance checks).
Please confirm whether the totals in item (1) include or exclude payments administered by the force on behalf of regional or national taskforces, and whether they include or exclude any payments made via third parties on behalf of the force (where recorded).
Please provide the information in a machine-readable format such as Excel or CSV.
If any part of this request is considered to exceed the appropriate limit under section 12, please provide advice and assistance under section 16 by indicating what refinement would bring it within the limit (for example, providing only the yearly totals requested in item (1)).
If you rely on any exemptions to withhold any information, please specify which exemption applies to each withheld element and disclose as much as can be provided, for example by supplying partial figures or banded data where exact figures cannot be disclosed.

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:

SP holds/does not hold the requested information.

Please provide the following information for each of the financial years 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25:

- 1. The total amount (in £) paid by the force that relates to CHIS, including (where held) rewards/payments, reimbursements/expenses and any other direct payments made to or for the benefit of CHIS. – **Partially disclosed, please see the accompanying file entitled 'FOI 22594 CHIS Payments Data'. Please see below, sections 23(5), 24(2) and 30(3).**



- 2. If held and reasonably retrievable within the appropriate cost limit, a breakdown for each year showing (a) rewards/payments versus expenses/reimbursements, and (b) payments made by cash versus payments made by bank transfer/other method.- **Withheld under Section 30(2)(b) and neither confirm nor deny Section 23(5), 24(2) and 30(3).**
- 3. The number of CHIS registered during each year (an end-of-year figure is fine if that is what you hold), and the number of CHIS who received any payment in each year. - **Withheld Section 30 (2)(b) and neither confirm nor deny section 23(5), 24(2) and 30(3)**
- 4. The highest single payment made to one CHIS in each year (amount only). - **Withheld Section 30 (2)(b), 38(1) and 40(2) and neither confirm nor deny section 23(5), 24(2) and 30(3)**
- 5. Copies of any current policy or guidance documents that cover CHIS payments and/or CHIS expenses (including authorisation levels), and any description of the audit/assurance process for CHIS payments (for example internal audit arrangements or finance checks). – **Withheld, section 30 (2)(b)**
- Please confirm whether the totals in item (1) include or exclude payments administered by the force on behalf of regional or national taskforces, and whether they include or exclude any payments made via third parties on behalf of the force (where recorded). - **Neither confirm nor deny section 23(5), 24(2) and 30(3)**

In accordance with Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, this letter represents a refusal notice for part of this request.

- Section 38 (1) (a) (b) – Health and Safety

Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to (a) endanger the physical or mental health of any individual, or (b) endanger the safety of any individual. This exemption is qualified and prejudice-based and, as such, we are required to evidence the harm in disclosure and apply the public interest test.

- Section 40(2) Personal Information

Section 40(2) 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 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.



- Section 30(2)(b):
relates to obtaining information from confidential sources

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:

- Section 23(5):
Section 23 is a class based absolute exemption. Confirming or denying whether any additional CHIS related information is held would reveal information supplied by, or relating to, bodies listed in section 23(3). The Act therefore prohibits confirmation or denial.
- Section 24(2):
Section 24 is a prejudice-based exemption. To confirm or deny the existence of further information would undermine national security by damaging the confidence of CHIS who assist the police and by enabling hostile individuals to draw inferences about the level or nature of covert activity in a force area. This prejudice would arise even where no national security related CHIS are in use.
- Section 30(3):
Section 30 is a class based qualified exemption. Confirming or denying whether additional information is held would provide insight into policing's covert capabilities, allowing offenders to adjust behaviour to avoid detection and undermining investigative and intelligence gathering functions.

Public Interest Test

Harm - Section 24

Confirming or denying the existence of any additional CHIS related information would risk undermining national security by damaging the recruitment, retention and confidence of individuals who assist law enforcement as covert sources. Even the perception that CHIS related information might be inferred from FOI responses can cause reluctance to engage with the police. Confirming or denying whether further material exists would allow individuals, hostile groups or organised criminals to infer whether covert activity is, or is not, taking place in a particular force area. These inferences could then be used to adapt behaviour to evade detection, identify covert tactics, or target individuals suspected of involvement in covert intelligence. This would compromise national security and threaten public safety.

Harm - Section 30(2)(b)

There is longstanding public knowledge that police forces use covert human intelligence sources to assist investigations. Disclosure of the requested information could, in principle, increase public understanding of how intelligence is gathered, how informants contribute to daily policing operations, and how this supports the prevention and detection of crime. Transparency may also help correct misconceptions about the use and management of CHIS and allow the public to consider whether such financial or operational arrangements are appropriate.

However, disclosure of the number of CHIS or the number receiving payment could reveal patterns of covert activity within the force area. Over time, the release of such information would allow individuals to analyse peaks or troughs in CHIS use and draw conclusions about operational priorities or investigative intensity. This would undermine intelligence gathering, hinder the prevention and detection of crime, and prejudice the force's ability to maintain confidential sources. It may also expose individuals, or those suspected of being CHIS, to the risk of harm. Disclosure would damage the confidence of those assisting law enforcement and would impede the force's ability to recruit and retain CHIS in future. While the public has a legitimate interest in transparency around policing, the ability of the police to protect the public, gather intelligence and maintain covert capabilities is of far greater weight. Disclosure that undermines CHIS confidence or reveals operational patterns would jeopardise those essential functions. The balance therefore lies firmly in favour of non disclosure.

Harm (Section 38)

Releasing the highest single annual CHIS payment, even as a standalone figure, could enable individuals to draw inferences about covert activity and potentially identify or suspect someone of being a CHIS. This creates a real risk of intimidation or physical harm to those involved and undermines the safety measures designed to protect sources, staff, and the public.

Factors Favouring Confirmation or Denial (Sections 24 and 30)

There is a public interest in demonstrating that policing is transparent about its use of public funds and its management of covert capabilities. Confirming or denying the existence of further information could help the public understand high-level structures around how CHIS are used and may support informed public debate about the appropriateness and proportionality of covert policing tactics. Public awareness of policing processes can contribute to confidence in the accountability of law enforcement.

Factors Against Confirmation or Denial (Sections 24 and 30)

However, confirming or denying whether additional CHIS-related material exists would reveal whether the force holds covert information of a sensitive nature, enabling individuals to infer operational capability, levels of covert activity, or the presence or absence of CHIS within the force area. Such inferences could be used by offenders or hostile groups to avoid detection, frustrate investigations, or exploit perceived gaps in covert coverage. Confirmation or denial would also undermine the confidence of existing or potential CHIS by suggesting their involvement could be indirectly exposed. This would damage intelligence-gathering and hinder the prevention and detection of crime. In addition, any suggestion of covert arrangements in a specific area could place individuals at risk of harm.

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 38(1)(a)(b)

Disclosure would promote transparency around public spending and support public confidence that CHIS payments are monitored and used appropriately.

Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 38(1)(a)(b)

CHIS-related information is kept confidential to protect the safety of those who assist police covertly. Release of the highest payment could allow individuals to speculate about CHIS involvement, placing them at increased risk of harm. Protecting life and safety outweighs the public interest in disclosure.



Balance Test (Sections 24, 30 and 38)

Although transparency supports accountability and public confidence, the risks associated with confirming or denying the existence of further CHIS-related information are substantial. Disclosure would prejudice national security by undermining covert capabilities, discouraging CHIS cooperation, and enabling hostile actors to exploit operational sensitivities. The public interest in protecting covert operations, safeguarding individuals and maintaining the effectiveness of intelligence-led policing outweighs the arguments in favour of confirmation or denial. The partial NCND under sections 23(5), 24(2), 30(3) and withheld section 38(1) is therefore upheld.

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