

18 March 2026

FOI Ref 22641

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

Thank you for your email of 10 March 2026 concerning FOI reference 21573.

I note that, with reference to ICO appeal IC-405539-W4V9, Staffordshire Police state that the force now wishes to revise its response to my request of 15 July 2025 and advise that no information is held in relation to the matters raised.

I also note the additional statement that the retention period for general email correspondence within Staffordshire Police is two years.

Given that this matter is currently before the Information Commissioner's Office, I would be grateful if you could clarify the revised position so that the record is clear for both parties and for the ICO's consideration.

1. Withdrawal of the Section 14 position

Please confirm whether Staffordshire Police has now formally withdrawn reliance on section 14 of the Freedom of Information Act in relation to this request, and whether the force's position is now that the request should be considered solely on the basis that the requested information was not held at the time the request was received.

2. Meaning of "no information held"

The revised response states that no information is held in relation to each element of the request. For clarity, please confirm which of the following applies:

- a) no such information was ever created or held by Staffordshire Police;
- b) relevant information may previously have existed but had already been deleted in accordance with retention policies by the date the request was received; or
- c) searches were undertaken and no responsive material was located within the systems examined.

3. Searches undertaken

Without disclosing personal data, it would assist if you could briefly outline the enquiries undertaken to determine that no information was held, for example:

- whether relevant shared mailboxes or departmental accounts were searched
- whether individual officer or staff mail accounts were examined
- whether any other record systems or repositories were considered.

4. Operation of the email retention policy

Your response refers to a two-year retention period for general email correspondence.



Please explain, at a general level, how this policy operates in practice, including:

- whether deletion occurs automatically or manually
- whether deletion occurs on a rolling basis or at defined intervals
- whether any record or audit trail is created when emails are deleted
- whether any exceptions apply where correspondence may be retained longer due to operational, complaint, legal, or information-rights considerations.

5. Timing in relation to the request

My request was submitted on 15 July 2025.

The correspondence referred to in the material underlying the request appears to include communications from May 2023 and July 2023, including exchanges with the NPCC dated 13 July 2023.

In light of this timing, please clarify whether any potentially relevant material:

- was deleted shortly before,
- on, or
- shortly after

the date my request was received, and if so, what retention process applied.

6. Original reliance on section 14

If the position is that relevant material had already been deleted by the date of my request, it would be helpful if you could explain why the original response relied upon section 14 (vexatious) rather than stating that the requested information was not held.

This point is significant because, if the material had already been deleted under a known retention policy, that position may have been identifiable at the time of the original response.

7. Preservation of information once the request was received

Please also confirm whether any steps were taken, once the request had been received, to preserve potentially relevant information pending consideration of the request and any subsequent complaint or ICO appeal.

If no such preservation step was taken, please confirm this.

SP received your request on 11/03/2026 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

SP's response to your enquiry is as follows:

SP holds some of the requested information.

Thank you for your email of 10 March 2026 concerning FOI reference 21573.

I note that, with reference to ICO appeal IC-405539-W4V9, Staffordshire Police state that the force now wishes to revise its response to my request of 15 July 2025 and advise that no information is held in relation to the matters raised.

I also note the additional statement that the retention period for general email correspondence within Staffordshire Police is two years.

Given that this matter is currently before the Information Commissioner's Office, I would be grateful if you could clarify the revised position so that the record is clear for both parties and for the ICO's consideration.

1. Withdrawal of the Section 14 position

Please confirm whether Staffordshire Police has now formally withdrawn reliance on section 14 of the Freedom of Information Act in relation to this request, and whether the force's position is now that the request should be considered solely on the basis that the requested information was not held at the time the request was received.

SP Response: SP can confirm that the s14 response is no longer being relied upon and that this has now been replaced with a 'no information held' response.

2. Meaning of "no information held"

SP Response: There is no recorded information held by Staffordshire Police pertaining to the specific question(s) asked.

The revised response states that no information is held in relation to each element of the request. For clarity, please confirm which of the following applies:

a) no such information was ever created or held by Staffordshire Police;

SP Response: Not known.

b) relevant information may previously have existed but had already been deleted in accordance with retention policies by the date the request was received; or

SP Response: Not known.

c) searches were undertaken and no responsive material was located within the systems examined.

SP Response: No searches were carried out because s14 was applied to the original request.

3. Searches undertaken

Without disclosing personal data, it would assist if you could briefly outline the enquiries undertaken to determine that no information was held, for example:

whether relevant shared mailboxes or departmental accounts were searched • whether individual officer or staff mail accounts were examined • whether any other record systems or repositories were considered.

SP Response: No searches were carried out because s14 was applied to the original request.



4. Operation of the email retention policy

SP Response: Please see the attached pdf document: **FOI 22641 Email Retention Policy Document**'. Please also see the below link for the retention schedule mentioned within the document. [retention-schedule.pdf](#)

Your response refers to a two-year retention period for general email correspondence. Please explain, at a general level, how this policy operates in practice, including:

- whether deletion occurs automatically or manually

SP Response: Automatically.

- whether deletion occurs on a rolling basis or at defined intervals

SP Response: On a rolling basis.

- whether any record or audit trail is created when emails are deleted

SP Response: No, there is no audit trail.

- whether any exceptions apply where correspondence may be retained longer due to operational, complaint, legal, or information-rights considerations.

SP Response: If there is a requirement for email correspondence to be retained in these circumstances, the emails would be saved in a hard drive to prevent them being automatically deleted.

5. Timing in relation to the request

My request was submitted on 15 July 2025.

The correspondence referred to in the material underlying the request appears to include communications from May 2023 and July 2023, including exchanges with the NPCC dated 13 July 2023.

In light of this timing, please clarify whether any potentially relevant material:

- was deleted shortly before,
- on, or
- shortly after

the date my request was received, and if so, what retention process applied.

SP Response: Not known.

6. Original reliance on section 14

If the position is that relevant material had already been deleted by the date of my request, it would be helpful if you could explain why the original response relied upon section 14 (vexatious) rather than stating that the requested information was not held.

This point is significant because, if the material had already been deleted under a known retention policy, that position may have been identifiable at the time of the original response.



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

SP Response: The decision was made to apply s14 to the request, therefore no enquiries/searches were carried out regarding whether the requested information was held or not.

7. Preservation of information once the request was received

Please also confirm whether any steps were taken, once the request had been received, to preserve potentially relevant information pending consideration of the request and any subsequent complaint or ICO appeal.

If no such preservation step was taken, please confirm this.

SP Response: The decision was made to apply s14 to the request, therefore no enquiries/searches were carried out regarding whether the requested information was held or not.

Please be advised that all Freedom of Information request responses are published on the SP website although personal details are not included.

Kind regards,

Information Access Management Team