| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information ResponseOur references:  |
| --- | --- |
| FOI 23-0933 - SutherlandFOI 23-0934 - CaithnessFOI 23-0935 - Easter RossFOI 23-0936 - InvernessFOI 23-0937 - Isle of SkyeFOI 23-0938 - Lochaber | FOI 23-0939 - Highlands & IslandsFOI 23-0940 - RosshireFOI 23-0942 - ShetlandFOI 23-0943 - OrkneyFOI 23-0944 - Western IslesFOI 23-0945 - Scotland by division |
|  | **Responded to:** 9 May 2023 |

Your twelve recent requests for information regarding police attendance at drug related deaths are replicated below, together with our response.

All requests have been individually considered in terms of the Act and the individual reference numbers for each are included above.

This combined response is for administrative purposes only.

**I wish to make a Freedom of Information Request for the number of drugs deaths that Police Scotland have attended in [areas listed above] in the last five years.**

**With a breakdown of each year.**

I’m afraid the position as regards these requests is quite complex.

We can provide you with information regarding *confirmed drug related deaths* recorded by Police Scotland in N Division (Highlands and Islands).

Information relating to drug related deaths is however recorded by divisional area only for reporting purposes and it is not further broken down - for example to the areas listed in each of your requests.

Any attempt to categorise the data held in that way would involve the creation of new data, an exercise that falls outwith the parameters of the Act but furthermore, would be so significantly time consuming that it is assessed it would far exceed the cost exemption in any event.

We could also provide you with information regarding how many *incidents* Police Scotland officers attended in any given area where the incident was categorised as a *sudden death.*

However, the information held on our incident recording system will not include details of the cause of death or indeed the suspected cause of death of the individual.

To explain, all deaths where drug misuse is suspected as being a contributory factor are subject to a thorough investigation by Police Scotland.

Once complete, all information is provided to our NHS partners who will undertake toxicology and post mortem examinations, before ultimately forming a professional medical opinion regarding the primary cause of death.

Information regarding that investigation and the ultimate cause of death is held separately to the incident recording data - meaning that in order to research your various requests, two separate data sets have to be linked and cross referred.

Given the number of incidents categorised as sudden death in the various areas listed across a five year period, I regret to inform you that I am unable to provide you with the information you have requested, as it would prove too costly to do so within the context of the fee regulations.

As you may be aware the current cost threshold is £600 and I estimate that it would cost well in excess of this amount to process each of your requests.

As such, and in terms of section 16(4) of the Act where section 12(1) (Excessive Cost of Compliance) has been applied, this represents a refusal notice for the information sought.

To be of assistance, I can advise you as follows.

National Records of Scotland publish annual data regarding drug related deaths:

[Drug-related Deaths in Scotland | National Records of Scotland (nrscotland.gov.uk)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths/drug-related-deaths-in-scotland/2021)

The latest data is reproduced as follows (by Health Board area you may be interested in):

| **Year Registered/ Health Board** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Scotland | 1,187 | 1,280 | 1,339 | 1,330 |
| Highland  | 45 | 39 | 49 | 44 |
| Orkney | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Shetland | 0 | 2 | 4 | 4 |
| Western Isles | 2 | 0 | 3 | 3 |

In addition, the Scottish Government publish more up-to-date data regarding *suspected* drug related deaths by Local Authority area:

[Suspected drug deaths in Scotland - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/suspected-drug-deaths-scotland-april-june-2022/documents/)

If you require any further assistance please contact us quoting the reference above.

You can request a review of this response within the next 40 working days by email or by letter (Information Management - FOI, Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH). Requests must include the reason for your dissatisfaction.

If you remain dissatisfied following our review response, you can appeal to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner (OSIC) within 6 months - [online](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal), by email or by letter (OSIC, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, KY16 9DS).

Following an OSIC appeal, you can appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

This response will be added to our [Disclosure Log](http://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log) in seven days' time.

Every effort has been taken to ensure our response is as accessible as possible. If you require this response to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know.