

Our Ref: IM-FOI-2022-0146
Date: 04 February 2022



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2002

I refer to your recent request for information which has been handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

For ease of reference, your request is replicated below together with the response.

Following the sentencing of Wayne Couzens for the murder of Sarah Everard, Police Scotland offered new 'verification checks' for lone officers to help reassure the public of their identity. This request seeks to determine how often those checks are being made.

According to [media reports at the time](#):

Under the scheme an officer's personal radio would be put on loudspeaker so that another officer or a member of a control room could confirm their identity. The control room would then create an incident number that could be displayed on the officer's mobile phone or radio to confirm the broadcast message details.

1) When were verification checks introduced by Police Scotland.

Police Scotland introduced a simple Officer Verification Process (OVP) on 2 October 2021 to provide reassurance to any member of the public concerned about whether or not they are being spoken to by a genuine police officer working alone.

On duty officers operating on their own can now proactively offer to carry out a verification check for anyone they come across who appears to be concerned for their safety.

A member of the public can also request that a verification check be done.

Although police officers normally work in pairs in Scotland and it is very rare for a lone police officer to approach a member of the public, there are occasions when this could happen.

The new process allows for the officer's Airwave radio to be put on loudspeaker and for an officer or member of police staff in a Police Scotland Control Room to confirm that the officer is who they say they are, that they are on duty, and the reason the officer is speaking to the member of the public.

The Control Room will then create an incident number which can be displayed on the officer's mobile device or Airwave radio to confirm the broadcast message details.

2) Since then how many have been made and how have they been made ie: through calls to the control room, through 'incident numbers' through calls by members of the public/ other means. Please specify by type.

A tag is added to STORM incidents when an OVP check is requested. This tag has been used on 18 occasions.

On two of those occasions a lone officer was engaged in assisting a lone female member of the public. On the other occasions it was used proactively by officers working in pairs to assist in identification where they felt there was some apprehension on behalf of a member of the public.

In all cases the verification was successful and accepted by the member of the public.

3) Have any checks resulted in an officer being unable to be identified, or of a person not being who they claim to be – i.e. they have been pretending to be a police officer.

There are no recorded instances of the verification failing - for this reason I must respond in terms of Section 17(1) of the Act: Information not held.

To be of assistance and provide further context, any such check would be impossible without an encrypted airwave device capable of communicating with the control room. Furthermore, all airwave devices are personal issue or fitted to police vehicles and identify the officer or unit using them which further assists with verification.

4) Has Police Scotland received any complaints concerning officer ID since verification checks were introduced? If so, please specify.

I have considered your request for the number of complaints about the officer verification process and am afraid that I am unable to provide a response, 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 your request.

As such, and in terms of Section 16(4) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 where Section 12(1) of the Act (Excessive Cost of Compliance) has been applied, this represents a refusal notice for the information sought.

To explain, there is no specific category relating to officer verification on our complaints system. The only way to provide you with this information in an accurate and consistent manner would be to individually examine 1,200 files, which even allowing only five minutes per entry would equate to 100 hours of work making this exercise far exceed the cost limitations of the Act.

5) Has Police Scotland received any i) complaints and/ or ii) correspondence from members of the public or interest groups concerning verification checks during the last 12 months? If so please detail.

i) The subject matter of complaints is addressed at Q4 above and Section 12 is applied.

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ii) In terms of correspondence, I can advise you that Information Management have responded to a request for information in respect of officer verification procedures available to deaf individuals. The response described the additional protocols implemented for people who are deaf or visually impaired.

Please be advised this information is publicly available.

As such, in terms of Section 16 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, I am refusing to provide you with the information sought. Section 16 requires Police Scotland when refusing to provide such information because it is exempt, to provide you with a notice which:

- (a) states that it holds the information,
- (b) states that it is claiming an exemption,
- (c) specifies the exemption in question and
- (d) states, if that would not be otherwise apparent, why the exemption applies.

I can confirm that Police Scotland holds the information that you have requested and the exemption that I consider to be applicable is set out at Section 25(1) - information otherwise accessible.

The information is publicly available on the Police Scotland Disclosure Log via the following link - [21 2558 Response](#)

Turning to the possibility for any correspondence including reference to 'officer verification' to be directed to any individual or business area across the wider organisation, 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 your request.

As such, and in terms of Section 16(4) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 where Section 12(1) of the Act (Excessive Cost of Compliance) has been applied, this represents a refusal notice for the information sought.

By way of explanation, searches would require to be undertaken to locate information of potential relevance to your request across the entire organisation which would entail searching over at least 20,000 mailboxes to establish if anything was held. Any attempt to simply locate information falling within the scope of your request would clearly significantly exceed the cost threshold.

If you require further assistance or are dissatisfied with the way in which Police Scotland has dealt with your request, you are entitled, in the first instance, to request a review of our actions and decisions.

Your request must specify the matter which gives rise to your dissatisfaction and it must be submitted within 40 working days of receiving this response - either by email to foi@scotland.pnn.police.uk or by post to Information Management (Disclosure), Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH.

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If you remain dissatisfied following the outcome of that review, you are thereafter entitled to apply to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner within six months for a decision. You can apply [online](#), by email to enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info or by post to Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9DS.

Should you wish to appeal against the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner's decision, there is an appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

As part of our commitment to demonstrate openness and transparency in respect of the information we hold, an anonymised version of this response will be posted to the Police Scotland Freedom of Information [Disclosure Log](#) in seven days' time.