

Our Ref: IM-FOI-2022-2334  
Date: 06 December 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.

### **1. Can you tell me the number and rank of staff and officers based at Laurencekirk Police Station please?**

Your request for information is considered to be exempt in terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (the Act).

I can first advise you that information regarding officer numbers and resource distribution across each and all police divisions is available on the Police Scotland website, accessible via the following link:

<http://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/police-scotland/212598/>

It is generally recognised that any breakdown beyond this published level, for example the number of officers or staff based in a particular town or area, is considered harmful to disclose.

On this basis the information requested by you is considered to be exempt in terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (the Act).

Section 16 of the Act requires Police Scotland 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.

Where information is considered to be exempt, this letter serves as a Refusal Notice that information is held and an explanation of the appropriate exemption is provided.

- Section 35(1)(a)&(b) - Law Enforcement

The information requested is exempt, as its disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice substantially the prevention or detection of crime and apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

If the number of police officers or staff based in a particular town or sub-division were disclosed, experience has shown that it would allow those intent on committing crime or causing disorder to gauge or to take measures to negate the likelihood of detection. It would allow criminals to plan how best to engage or occupy existing police resources in an effort to maximise their chances of committing serious crime, therefore harming the efficient and effective conduct of the service.

This is a non-absolute exemption and requires the application of the public interest test.

- Section 39(1) - Health, safety and the environment

The disclosure of the information requested would be likely to increase the number of attacks by those being arrested or who have committed crime. This will be particularly relevant in smaller geographic areas and with a low number of officers and other staff available and/or on duty. This could have a serious consequence when large groups are involved in disorder, as they will be aware of the number of resources available to deal with the incident.

This is a non-absolute exemption and requires the application of the public interest test.

#### Public Interest

Although it is acknowledged that public accountability would favour disclosure, the need to ensure the effective conduct of the service in relation to the prevention and detection of crime and the public safety considerations involved in the delivery of operational policing clearly favours non-disclosure of the information requested.

I would contend the public interest must always lie in protecting the ability of the police to prevent and detect crime and furthermore our reasoning for withholding similar information of this nature has been supported by the Scottish Information Commissioner, (Decision 235/2014). The full decision can be found at the link below:

[www.itspublicknowledge.info/ApplicationsandDecisions/Decisions/2014/201401926.aspx](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ApplicationsandDecisions/Decisions/2014/201401926.aspx)

## **2. What was the cost of replacing the police house and building / furnishing the new police station in Laurencekirk?**

Prior to the inception of Police Scotland in 2013, a sum of £312,000 was paid by the former Grampian Police to Aberdeenshire Council for the build/fit out works of the Police office at Mearns Academy.

## **3. What is the annual cost of providing and running this service?**

Annual running costs for police station at the school are;

Financial year 2021/22: £13,255.51

Financial year 2020/21: £8,051.47

I can advise you that the difference between the two time periods was due to ongoing costs as some repair (FM) works were carried out on site in 2021/22, whereas there were none the previous year.

**4. Do you have an agreed attendance time for 999 calls in this area?**

**5. Do you meet these targets, what are they and what are the figures?**

For ease of response, Q4 & 5 have been answered together;

In terms of Section 17 of the Act, I can confirm that the information you seek is not held by Police Scotland. By way of explanation under the Contact Assessment Model (CAM) there are no time frame targets set.

**6. What training do all police staff or officers receive in understanding and helping with autistic members of the public - can I see a copy of the training given?**

There is no 'formal' training specifically related to Autism provided to police officers. However Module 4 of the Operational Safety Manual does provide officers and staff with advice for communicating effectively with people with mental health problems and considerations when dealing with individuals who have learning disabilities.

Police Scotland also provide awareness relating to Autism through various documents and guidance which is provided and accessible to officers via Police Scotland's intranet system. Police Scotland has previously worked with ATLAS (Inverclyde based Autism organisation) and Scottish Autism, through delivering inputs to probationers and Officer Safety Training instructors. Divisions can also have local arrangements and carry out awareness training with local partners.

As there is no 'formal' training specifically related to Autism and accordingly section 17 of the above act applies, notice that information is not held.

**7. Do you employ autistic police officers? If so how many?**

There is no requirement for serving police officers to disclose this information and therefore section 17 of the above act applies, notice that information is not held.

For the avoidance of doubt, the only way to identify where this information may have been disclosed would be to examine all personnel record entries for every officer across the service, an exercise which would far exceed the cost limitations of the Act.

**8. What is the number of suicides and attempted suicides recorded each year for this force area for the past ten years?**

I must first advise you that the National Records of Scotland publish information regarding the prevalence of suicide and suspected drug related deaths in Scotland.

Information is available online split by local authority area (table 5):

[www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths/suicides](http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths/suicides)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/suspected-drug-deaths-scotland-april-june-2021/>

I can advise you that sudden death reports are submitted by Police Scotland to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.

In respect of those, 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, the systems that we have in place, cannot search death reports to COPFS by the *alleged* circumstances of the death, meaning each report would have to be individually assessed - an exercise which I estimate would far exceed the cost limit set out in the Fees Regulation given the scope of your request.

**9. With regard to SAR requests, how many do you receive each year, and how many are supplied within the ICO guidelines?**

I can confirm that all Subject Access Requests (SARs) are processed in accordance with the various legislation and ICO guidance. To provide a representative sample I can advise you that in 2021 we received 5905 such requests.

**10. With the issues of your 101 service, and reports it may be closed in the future:**

**a) What is the cost of this service?**

Having considered your request in terms of the above Act, 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.

I am afraid that the gathering of this data is quite complex as we are unable to separate dedicated resourcing for 101 calls alone. To explain, overall costs for 101 service would include (but not be limited to) salary, technology, estates etc. and any exercise to isolate those resources (from 999 call services for example) would far exceed the cost limitations of the Act.

**b) How many staff operate and take calls on the system?**

I have interpreted your question to refer exclusively to those staff employed in the role of Service Advisor. Service Advisors are responsible for answering calls to Police Scotland via our 999 and 101 non-emergency lines. They are also responsible for answering our Contactus (email).

## OFFICIAL

I can advise you that we currently employ 519 Service Advisors, which equates to a Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of 472 posts.

Police Scotland continue to recruit Service Advisors with an aim to match the Service Centre resource profile to our 'non-linear' demand levels, i.e. by increasing our staffing levels over the summer peak demand months and reducing it during the lower demand periods.

This will give us an annual average of 489 FTE positions over the entire reporting period.

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.police.uk](mailto:foi@scotland.police.uk) or by post to Information Management (Disclosure), Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH.

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](mailto: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.