| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information Response Our reference: FOI 23-1568  Responded to: 30th June 2023 |
| --- | --- |

Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

## Does your Police force have a standard procedure for a call-out to an incident involving a suspected drug overdose, if so can you share it with me?

Please find attached Police Scotland’s National Guidance for Drug Related Deaths – Investigatory Considerations.

## How many incidents involving a suspected drug overdose did your police force attend to in each of the last three full years?

## How many callouts involving a fatal drug overdose did your police force attend to in each of the last three full years?

Whilst we could provide you with information regarding how many incidents Police Scotland attended where the incident was categorised as a sudden death, the information held on our incident recording system, STORM, will not include details of the cause of death, or indeed the suspected cause of death of the individual.

The only way to establish whether a sudden death incident was a suspected drug related death, would be to individually examine all sudden death incidents. 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 carry out this exercise, and as such, Section 12(1) of the Act would apply.

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.

We have therefore considered this part of your request in terms of Suspected Drug Related Deaths data.

The table below provides the number of Suspected Drug Related Deaths from 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2022.

| **Year** | **Suspected** |
| --- | --- |
| 2020 | 1,430 |
| 2021 | 1,338 |
| 2022 | 1,194 |

This data is sourced from management information from Police Scotland who compile figures on the basis of reports from police officers attending scenes of death. Classification as a suspected drug death is based on an officer's observations and initial enquiries at the scene of death.

Police Scotland monitor suspected drug deaths to inform prevention and enforcement activity. In order to provide a consistent count over time, all deaths originally classified as a 'suspected drug death' are included here, irrespective of their eventual final categorisation of cause of death.

The Police Scotland data presented here is Management Information (MI) and should not be considered as National or Official Statistics. MI is information that is based on administrative data used for operational purposes. It is used in the normal course of business to inform operational activity, prevention and enforcement activity. Whilst any data used goes through a process of quality assurance, MI is not always subject to the same level of validation and checking as Official Statistics.

You should also be advised that suspected drug related death data is updated when toxicology results are returned and as such this data will change on a daily basis. There will also be deaths which were never recorded as part of suspected drug related deaths data which following new information is then recorded as such.

## What number total number of hours were worked by each of the following ranks of police officer within the police force in relation to incidents where a fatal overdose was involved, in each of the past three years: constables, scenes of crime officers, sergeants, inspectors, chief inspectors, superintendents?

## What was the average number of hours for which there was a police cordon in place for cases involving a suspected fatal overdose for the last three reported years?

## What was the average number of officers, and the typical rank of the officers deployed to maintain the cordon in cases involving a suspected fatal drug overdose, in each of the last three reported years?

Having considered your questions in terms of the Act, I’m afraid that section 17 of the Act would apply and the specific information requested is not held by Police Scotland.

By way of explanation, police officer deployment is dynamic and will plans will change regularly as a result of intelligence and/ or operational need.

Officers can be diverted from what might be described as a routine patrol in order to respond to an ongoing incident etc.

Similarly patrols may become ‘routine’ over a period of days/ weeks as a result of a particular incident or particular community concerns etc. but then resources are deployed elsewhere as the situation changes.

We do not record what part of an officer’s shift is spent on patrol as opposed to dealing with particular incidents etc. Officers will be deployed in real time according to operation need.

Furthermore, the number of officers required throughout an investigation will fluctuate and officers involved in a particular investigation, or multiple investigations, can be redeployed to other duties at any time, dependant on their skillsets.

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](mailto:foi@scotland.police.uk) 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](mailto:enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info) 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.