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Our Ref: IM-FOI-2022-2170
Date: 08 November 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.

Q1. Does your police force provide mandatory training for its officers, in handling those with neurodiverse conditions, who come into contact with Police?

Q2. If yes to Q1, could you provide details of this training? This might include how long it lasts, a brief outline of what is covered etc.

In response to the two questions above I must respond 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 Police Scotland do not provide mandatory training specific to the handling those with neuro-diverse conditions.

Q3. If your police force does not currently provide mandatory training for its officers in this area, could you please confirm if neurodiversity awareness training is in the process of being introduced?

Upon appointment, all new police officer recruits and Police Custody & Security Officers (PCSOs) receive a copy of the current Operational Safety Training (OST) manual, which they are instructed to review and familiarise themselves with. Within this, there is a standalone module on 'Medical Implications & Mental Health' where there is general overview of dealing with people with mental health and other neuro-diverse conditions, this includes recognition/indicators, and effective communication strategies.

This written content is supplemented by the respective Initial OST courses (7 days for police recruits and 5 days for PCSOs), undertaken upon appointment. Day 1 of these courses focusses on all theoretical aspects in respect of Operational Safety, and includes reference to managing encounters with people with mental health and other neuro-diverse conditions, or those suffering a mental health crisis.

Whilst not being specific to particular neurodiversity conditions, there remains reference across the course as to how a disability or other conditions may impact upon communication strategies, and how these can also be considered an impact factor whilst assessing a situation and deciding upon a course of action through application of the National Decision Model, to best ensure positive engagement.

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In addition to the initial training course, officers and PCSOs are to be recertified in OST annually, whereby they attend a two-day recertification course. Aside from the practical elements of this training, this course refreshes knowledge in theory relative to OST with a focus on de-escalation and communication; reinforcing principles around professional decision making.

Additionally, during Police Officer probation training, the following lessons are provided. Again, these lessons are not specific to neurodiversity.

Valuing Diversity and Inclusion – This lesson does not specify neurodiversity but does feature significant content around Protected Characteristics, including Disability within The Equality Act 2010.

Scots Criminal Law: Police Powers and Principles of Evidence – Prisoner Rights, Care and Welfare – this lesson introduces the concepts of Vulnerability and Risk in relation to a person in custody. Neurodiversity is not specified, but assessment of behaviours are (this is examined in more detail in role specific custody training).

Protection and Wellbeing in Our Communities – this lesson defines adults at risk. It does not specify neurodiversity or autism, but covers powers and policies available to Police and other authorities in situations where a person is unable to safeguard their own wellbeing, their property, rights or other interests. It discusses the 3 point test to include adults who are at risk of harm and because they are affected by a disability (and other medical conditions) could be more vulnerable to being harmed when compared to others who are not so affected.

Suspect Interview Skills – This describes the process for interview preparation which includes gathering relevant information which may include statements and behaviours displayed by the person being interviewed which may be relevant. Arguably, this could include mention of neurodiversity and autism, but these statements are not specific.

Q4. Could you provide any copies, if they exist, of your force's protocol/guidance documents for handing those with neurodiverse conditions (for example at arrest, or in Police custody).

In response to the questions above, I must respond as per question 1, Police Scotland do not have any training specifically focussed on neurodiversity as such in terms of Section 17 of the Act, I can confirm that the information you seek is not held by Police Scotland.

Should you require any further assistance please contact Information Management quoting the reference number given.

If you 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 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.