



Force Disclosure Unit
Police Headquarters
London Road
DEVIZES
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN

Date: 9th November 2022

Ref: FOI 2022/819

Dear,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 12th October 2022 concerning neurodiversity training.

I am required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to handle all requests in a manner that is blind as to the identity and motives of the requestor. Any information released as a response to a request is regarded as being published and therefore in the public domain without caveat.

Your request for information has now been considered and after having consulted our Learning & Development team, our Force Policy Officer and our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion team – I am now able to respond as follows.

You wrote & our response:

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

Yes, training is provided.

2. 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.

Autism awareness is part of the Force's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy. Force wide briefings have been published. All officers have undertaken training as part of a two-day course on Mental Health and Learning Disabilities. New officers receive inputs and handouts.

In summary the Mental Health and Learning Disabilities training entails:

What is Mental Ill Health?

Discuss the possible diversity issues around mental health presentation.

Consider gender – particularly in some cultures. Consider cultural stereotypes and beliefs. Consider age – does being older make you more prone to mental health issues? Does being younger protect you or add risk? Consider responses – who are

less likely to talk about it? Older generations...men? Consider the stigma around mental ill health!

Who does Mental Ill Health affect?

Categories of mental health conditions, neuroses and psychoses.

Mental health continuum.

Initial support to people experiencing mental ill health.

Learning Disabilities



Autism – which is it? MH or LD?

Actually neither. It is a neuro-developmental disorder, which is SIMILAR to a learning disability. Autistic people see, hear and feel the world differently to other people. They may also have learning disabilities, mental ill health, or other conditions, but this must be treated separately where possible.

Reveal question: Would the MHA act apply to people with an Autism Spectrum Condition?

The MHA section 136 would NOT AUTOMATICALLY apply to someone with an autism spectrum condition UNLESS they displayed 'abnormally or seriously irresponsible conduct'. 136 powers can be used if the criteria are met. This would usually only apply during a severe 'episode'. If they are: appropriate adult. Autism and Asperger's are within this scope.

However, we care about whether the person is "mentally disordered within the meaning of s1(1) of the Mental Health Act." The Act's definition of "mental disorder" includes autism, meaning that autistic people can be sectioned under the Act without having a mental health problem.

Equally, it CAN be classed as a learning disability as it affects development in some people – others, however, can be extremely intelligent. Equally, many do not have a learning disability.

Autism and Asperger's syndrome – can affect social interactions, communications and how someone reacts to social situations. Some of the social skills can be learned (reading body language etc, but ASD children have trouble making friends, eye contact & communicating as not yet learned these behaviours).

Each case is specific to an individual but some simple guidance is:
Communication must be clear – avoid jargon, acronyms, and metaphors; your speech may be taken very literally so bear this in mind.

Patience is a virtue – rushing, issuing ultimata and orders can heighten tensions; force, as ever, is the last resort, only where absolutely needed. Take account of familiarity / routine – taking advice from or including people familiar with a person, their routine and their normality can reap huge benefits and avoid inadvertently escalating situations.

Appropriate adults are required by PACE for anyone who is mentally disordered or appears to be mentally disordered. Individuals with Asperger's syndrome and high-functioning autism may not necessarily 'appear' mentally disordered (whatever that means); this is whether or not they appear to be in 'need' of such support.

Ways to communicate and reasonable adjustments

Why is it important for the police to consider their response to Mental health?

Recognising mentally vulnerable adults

Responding to suicide

Other training is available on the Force SharePoint site where staff are directed to refer to – links where there are training materials and resources to support and reference.

Force-wide training in the form of workshops has also been undertaken by some staff and officers with lived experience events presented by colleagues.

These workshops covered:

The session is aimed at police officers, staff and volunteers of all ranks and roles and will give everyone an understanding of what autism is, the traits, characteristics and behaviours of autism, how we can improve our interactions with victims, witnesses, suspects and offenders, who have autism. The sessions looked at some analogies and phrases – personal experiences of colleagues who have Asperger's syndrome and what it is like for them in the workplace.

3. 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?

Further information is provided on our internal Equality Diversity & Inclusion SharePoint site that gives current information aimed at allowing our staff to select which areas they may need further information on and resources to support them in their understanding. We also have funding to run a 'Creased Puddle' course to train members of our Neurodiverse support network (x 15 members).

4. 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).

We do not have any Force protocol or guidance documents for handling those with neurodiverse conditions. However, we also follow guidance from the National Autistic Society and a copy of the guidance can be found using the link below:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/shop/products/books-and-resources/autism-a-guide-for-police-officers-and-staff>

Wiltshire Police do have a SharePoint page on Autism though which contains links to various guidance from the National Police Autism Association, the National Autistic Society and the University of Bath. The guidance covers things like 'Criminal Justice – a guide for police officers and professional' (which includes advice in interviewing a suspect etc.), 'What to do when conducting an investigative interview with an autistic person' and 'Autism & the Police Response Officer Version'.

I am satisfied that all the relevant information has been passed to me and been considered in the light of your request within the time constraints applicable under the legislation.

Wiltshire Police would like to thank you for the interest that you have shown in the Force.

Yours sincerely,

Force Disclosure Decision Maker

Wiltshire Police offers a re-examination of your case under its review procedure.



Force Disclosure Unit

Wiltshire Police HQ, London Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2DN
Telephone 101

Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from Wiltshire Police, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.

2. How to Request a Review

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing to the:

Force Disclosure Unit
Wiltshire Police Headquarters,
London Road, Devizes,
Wiltshire,
SN10 2DN

Email at disclosure@wiltshire.police.uk.

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Force Disclosure Unit within 20 working days of the Force's response to the original FOI request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing to include confirmation of the reasons for the review. The review will be conducted by another Decision Maker, who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Force Disclosure Unit will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to complete the review within twenty working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 working days.

The Independent Decision Maker will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, taking into account the matters raised by the complaint.

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4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Decision Maker will reply to the complainant with the result of the review. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the review, they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following details:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 700
Fax: 01625 524 510
Email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk