



**Force Disclosure Unit
Police Headquarters**

London Road
DEVIZES
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN

Date 2nd May 2023

Our Ref FOI 2023-402

I write in connection with your request for information dated 5th April 2023, concerning police informants.

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 I am able to respond as follows.

You wrote:

Using the latest available data and going back to 2015, please provide a year-by-year breakdown of the following:

(a) total number of registered informants for each individual year

Of this total number of registered informants how many were:

- (b) Paid Informants*
- (c) Unpaid informants*
- (d) Active Participants*

And for each year where the Data response for (b) has been given, please provide:

- (e) the total figure for all monies paid to informants each individual year since 2015*

Our response:

Proud to serve and protect our communities

This information is exempt courtesy of s30(2)(b) - Investigations and proceedings conducted by public authorities.

S30 is a class based, qualified exemption requiring the PIT only.

Factors favouring disclosure - There is information within the public domain confirming that the Police use Covert Human Intelligence Sources to assist them with investigations and the effective delivery of law enforcement. Disclosure would enhance the public understanding of how Constabularies use information relating to informants and how the intelligence received assists in day to day investigations, such as operations to support the prevention and detection of crime.

Accurate and reliable data disclosed to the public, via official channels, will enable informed and precise public debate around the subject of informants, allowing for greater transparency and accountability. This in turn will enable a more thorough local assessment of the use of informants, including their effectiveness. Disclosure of information, relating to the way in which public funds are being spent, will enable individuals to understand what the police budget allocation is for informants.

Disclosure would also assist in stopping any incorrect rumours or falsehoods relating to how the police store and manage how informants assist the police.

Factors favouring non-disclosure - The Police Service is tasked with protecting the community we serve and solving crime and there is a public interest argument in ensuring we are open and transparent with regard to policing investigations and operations. Disclosure of the information requested could identify informant activity within a force area. Over a period of time, if several disclosures were made, individuals could analyse the information and identify any sudden peaks or troughs in informant activity. This would hinder the prevention and detection of crime and also prejudice the forces ability to maintain confidential sources. Consequently the forces' future law enforcement capabilities would be affected.

It may be viewed by those not involved in the management of informants that a statistical number in itself is unlikely to cause any such adverse effects. However, the subject has to be viewed more as a whole. Those determined to identify informants will use small pieces of information to build a more complete picture and it is the cumulative effect of information disclosures that the Police Service feel could lead to this.

Balancing Test - There is information within the public domain confirming that police use covert human intelligence sources to assist them with investigations and the effective delivery of law enforcement. However, as has been mentioned informants play a vital role in assisting the police, and is based very much on relationships built on trust and the expectation of complete confidentiality that Wiltshire Police would never disclose information which would compromise our tactics.

It is therefore our opinion that the balance lies in favour of non-disclosure of the information.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Constabulary, when refusing to provide information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which: (a) states that fact, (b) specifies the exemption in question and (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 this letter acts as a Refusal Notice for those aspects of your request.

Exemptions applied:

Section 30 (2)(b) – Investigations and proceedings conducted by public authorities

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.

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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 ext 62005



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 Fol 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.

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

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www.wiltshire.police.uk | [Facebook/wiltshirepolice](https://www.facebook.com/wiltshirepolice) | [Twitter/@wiltshirepolice](https://twitter.com/wiltshirepolice) | [LinkedIn/company/wiltshirepolice](https://www.linkedin.com/company/wiltshirepolice)

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

Please note that the ICO's offices will be closed for the foreseeable future and are therefore unable to receive correspondence via post.

If you should wish to contact them, please visit <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>