

WILTSHIRE POLICE



XXX – Via email



Police Headquarters

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Wiltshire
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Date: 26th February 2024

Our ref: 2024-117

Reply contact name:

Dear XXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 28th January 2024 regarding lost and incorrectly sealed DNA samples.

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.

Following receipt of your request, research was conducted by South West Forensics.

Your request for information has now been considered and I am able to respond as follows.

You wrote:

The Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner's annual report 2022 to 2023 (published 24/1/24) states that police forces lost 2081 DNA samples in 2022/23 (para.53):

<https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fpublications%2Fbiometrics-and-surveillance-camera-commissioner-report-2022-to-2023%2Fbiometrics-and-surveillance-camera-commissioners-annual-report-2022-to-2023-accessible&data=05%7C02%7Cdisclosure%40wiltshire.police.uk%7C19ea68289d59465808b008dc2048209c%7C4e5729cf852d4510921251157ca27e3e%7C0%7C0%7C638420741378619166%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWlloiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ikh1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=71o5%2FgS0wHaUlrB7539sg12vj%2BKycbm5h%2B0Z3ZCHVEc%3D&reserved=0>

1. Please provide the number of DNA samples Wiltshire Constabulary lost in 2022/23.

Paragraph 50 states:

'50. Failure to seal the bag correctly again features highly as an issue, rising from 953 occasions in the last reporting year to 1214 to this year...'

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2. Please provide the number of failures attributed to incorrectly sealed bags recorded by Wiltshire Constabulary in 2022/23.

Our response:

When preparing a response to this FOI request, it was taken into consideration that there appears to be some confusion around the terminologies 'error' and 'lost'.

The figures of samples that were received from Custody with unsealed bags was 6.

These would class as errors (alongside other errors such as missing swabs). In the case of unsealed bags however, these aren't 'lost' samples, as they are still submitted for profiling.

Samples that are deemed 'lost' are defined as samples recorded as 'Taken' on the Police National Computer (PNC) but not forwarded on for processing.

Numbers of those in the same time period were 14 (2,819 PACE DNA samples submitted in same timeframe)

It should be noted however, that the determination of 'lost' is only relevant in a time period restricted to the weeks following the addition of the 'Taken' status on PNC. These samples could have been submitted by officers at a later date (sometimes months/years later), so the above figures are the very worst-case scenario.

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