



WILTSHIRE POLICE

Force Disclosure Unit

Police Headquarters
London Road
DEVIZES
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN

Date: 5th March 2024

Ref: FOI 2024/188

Dear,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 13th February 2024 concerning hostage and crisis negotiator 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.

Following receipt of your request, searches were conducted with our Learning & Development team and our Force Operations team of Wiltshire Police.

Your request for information has now been considered and it is not possible to meet your requirements in full.

You wrote & our response:

I'm trying to collate information on policing for hostage and crisis negotiations to understand how forces are tackling serious crime.

Please can you provide information to the below under the freedom of information act, if possible:

1. How many officers on the force are currently hostage and crisis negotiator trained?

This information is exempt under S31(1)(a)(b) – Law Enforcement. Section 31 is a prejudice-based qualified exemption and therefore, it requires a public interest test to be conducted establishing the harm, which can be found below:

Overall Harm

The FOI Act is 'applicant blind'. This means that we cannot, and do not, ask about the motives of anyone who asks for information. In providing a response to one person, we are expressing a willingness to provide the same response to anyone, including those who might represent a threat to the UK.

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Where disclosure will likely jeopardise the primary functions of Wiltshire Police, namely to prevent and detect crime as well as apprehend and prosecute offenders, information needs to be protected.

In view of those functions the tactical role of Negotiators is to deal with incidents and negotiate with subjects to resolve operations in line with the incident commander's strategy. By doing so they provide stability and support to those in command of such incidents. Therefore, providing the number of trained Negotiators within Wiltshire Police, along with other forces, would aid criminals to identify in which force areas the level of such a resource might be deemed as weaker, and use this knowledge to their advantage in furthering criminal activity around the force area and country as a whole.

In addition, naming the forces that deliver Negotiator training would provide enough information for individuals (or groups of individuals) with criminal or malicious intent to locate, reconnoitre and directly target relevant training facilities. This would include disrupting the ability to provide such training safely and efficiently. Ultimately, this would provide criminals a tactical advantage over the police, which could then be used to hinder our ability to fulfil basic law enforcement functions.

The disclosure of information which is likely to undermine the Police service's ability to serve the public by providing the primary functions stated, can only be considered as being harmful to the public.

Public Interest Test

Considerations favouring disclosure –

Disclosure would allow for greater public awareness and openness over Wiltshire Police's resource capability to deal with Crisis negotiation situations. As a result, the public would become more informed on how and where public funds are being spent in this area of policing and gain a greater knowledge of the resources available to prevent and detect crime. In itself that can lead to a reduction of crime and give the public more confidence in reporting incidents of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

Considerations favouring non-disclosure –

Disclosing the requested information would have a detrimental impact upon operational policing. Disclosing the number of trained Negotiators within Wiltshire Police, along with information relevant to their training, would provide those individuals or groups within the criminal fraternity a significant operational advantage as the information could be used with a view to disrupting training, or develop tactics that would divert resources away from locations that they wish to target. This would clearly jeopardise the ability of Wiltshire Police to respond appropriately to criminal activity and thereby protect the public.

The requested information could be used to compromise law enforcement capabilities by decreasing the ability of the police to fight crime, which would increase the commission of crime and subsequently have a detrimental impact on public safety as well as decrease public confidence in the police force.

Balancing Test

After weighing up the competing interests, I have determined that the disclosure of the requested information would not be in the public interest. I consider that the benefit that would result from the information being disclosed does not outweigh the considerations favouring non-disclosure.

I find that the strongest reasons favouring disclosure are to provide greater public awareness and openness in how public funding is being spent, and whether Wiltshire Police is suitably resourced to deal with crisis negotiation situations.

However, the strongest and most decisive reasons against disclosure are the impact that disclosure would have on public safety, and the prevention of the malicious redirecting of Wiltshire Police's resources.

Clearly the release of any information that is likely to assist the criminal network and impact on our operational and tactical capabilities cannot be in the public interest and whilst wishing to embrace the ethos of information disclosure, this cannot take precedence over public safety.

As a result, the balance of public interest lies in favour of withholding this information.

2. What is the type of training that is undertaken for this?

Training consists of attending a residential course which includes assessed role plays.

3. How many days does training take?

The National Crisis Negotiator Course is two weeks long.

4. Who provides the training?

Training is provided by various UK Police forces.

In relation to which specific forces provides this training, this information is exempt under S31(1) – Law Enforcement. Please refer to the public interest test considerations detailed above for question 1 for more detail with regards to the harm in disclosing this information.

5. How many officers undertook hostage and negotiator training in the individual years between 2017 - 2023?

Year	Number of Officers Who Undertook Negotiator Training
2017	2
2018	5
2019	4
2020	6
2021	2
2022	1
2023	6

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 31(1)(a)(b) – Law Enforcement
Section 31(1) – Law Enforcement

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

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