

WILTSHIRE POLICE



XXXXXX - By email

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

Date 14th May 2024

Our Ref FOI 2024-496

Dear XXXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 10th May 2024, concerning Injuries Caused by Police Dogs.

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 the Dog Unit Manager at Wiltshire Police.

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

You wrote (and Our Response)

Further to my previous request FOI 2024-490, could you please explain :-

In the case of the 32-year-old white woman, what you mean by "attempting suicide minor injury whilst saving life" (i.e. where was the woman injured, was she injured on the run, at a property etc, not sure what you mean by "whilst saving life"- how exactly was the dog rescuing her?) Did she take legal action against your force over her injury/ how much did she get in compensation if this was awarded?

The handler attended a report of a high-risk missing person following a report that she had taken an overdose. The handler and dog commenced an open search of an area identified where the female may be. The dog was free searching off the lead. The handler was single crewed. Handler and dog searched and located the female who was up a tree. Female was taking more tablets and as handler approached the female, it was clear she had a ligature around her neck. She jumped from the tree and the handler caught her. Due to the dynamic nature of the incident the dog lunged forward and bit the female in the midriff. The bite mainly held the thick jacket she was

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wearing with no significant injuries. Handler detained the female and removed the ligature. No complaint and no compensation claim.

Was the white male, 26, an ordinary member of the public (i.e. not a suspect in a crime)? Did he get bitten on his hand? Was he required to go to hospital because of this? Why was the dog at the kennels? Did he take legal action against your force/ how much did he get in compensation if this was awarded?

He was an ordinary member of the public who was a kennel hand at a 3rd party boarding kennels used for the occasional boarding of Police dogs. The handler was on leave. The dog had been fed and the male has entered the kennel to take away the food bowl. As he has done so, this dog has bitten his hand causing a minor injury. The male stated he believed the dog was going for the bowl and not his hand. Minor injury, unaware if this entailed a visit to hospital. Future protocols put in place to move the dog to the other side of the kennel when removing a bowl. No complaint and no compensation claim.

Was the white male, 63, an ordinary member of the public (i.e. not a suspect in a crime)? Where did the bite occur (i.e. where was the cage) Was the man required to go to hospital because of this? Did he take legal action against your force over the injury/ how much did he get in compensation if this was awarded?

The male was a member of the public that was an employee at a venue used for Police Dog training. The dog concerned was in for assessment and further training. At the time of the incident the dog was secure in the back of a van. The male was at the rear of the van and the dog was barking at him. He told the dog to be quiet and somehow the dog was able to escape from the van – it has not been possible to ascertain the reason for this. The male received a minor bite on his leg and a more severe bite on his hand. He was taken to hospital by the handler and had stitches in his hand. No complaint and no compensation claim.

Why was the 40-year-old missing person hiding in undergrowth? Did he have to go to hospital due to the bite on his arm? Did he take legal action against your force/ how much did he get in compensation if this was awarded?

The handler and dog were on a tasked patrol looking for a missing person. The dog indicated on some undergrowth. The handler was unable to enter the undergrowth at that location and worked around to the other side. There was a quick movement, and the dog took hold of the male's sleeve – no injuries caused. No complaint and no compensation claim.

Is it possible to please send me any mandatory dog handling/safety training presentation slides, audio recordings, brochures, leaflets, documents, guidelines given to/shown to the police officers who handled the dogs - outlined in the previous response - before they were allowed to go on duty with them?

The answer to this question is exempt by virtue of Section 31(1)(a)(b) - Law Enforcement.

Section 31 is a qualified prejudice-based exemption and therefore requires Wiltshire Police to establish the harm in disclosure, along with the public interest both favouring and against any disclosure.

Harm test

Disclosing information into the public domain - specifically the Operational Guidance and Dog Handling / Safety Training documentation around Police Dogs - would undermine the core principles of policing; namely to prevent and detect crime and keep people safe.

Disclosure of this information could cause substantial harm to planned policing operations, and all individuals involved i.e. police employees and the community. If Wiltshire Police were to place this information into the public domain, this would prejudice our ability to prevent and detect crime, and to apprehend or prosecute offenders; providing offenders with the information they would need to help evade detection, and therefore effecting the Force's ability to protect the community.

Factors favouring disclosure

Placing this information into the public domain would lead to an increased public awareness on these matters. This in turn may lead to a reduction in crime or more information being supplied by the public and would also allow the public to better protect themselves against crime. Disclosure would also ensure that Wiltshire Police can be held accountable for our actions, and show the Force is being as open and transparent with the public as possible.

Factors against disclosure

Providing the Operational Guidance and Dog Handling / Safety Training documentation would hinder the prevention and detection of crime. This would result in both planned and emergency operations being compromised. Offenders would be able to gain valuable information that would assist them in evading capture; i.e. they could use this information to understand not only the capabilities of our Dog Section and the animals within it, but also any potential limitations therein. They could then also use this information to better plan their criminal activity. By using this information, offenders could improve the likelihood of them evading capture, planning their activity around any potential weaknesses in our Dogs Section with the potential to put Police Staff (Handlers and their animals) at risk and – as a consequence – the general public. The likelihood is that with the public being at greater risk, this would result in trust in the Force diminishing and increase of crime being seen. Disclosure of information sensitive to operations and tactics used would severely impact on the Force's resources, which in turn would also assist offenders to evade capture and/or commit more crime.

Balance test

Whilst there is a public interest in transparency and openness between the Force and the public, in addition to the public seeing how the Force are engaging with the threat from criminals, there is a stronger interest in ensuring the public are protected from the threat of criminals, and that the enforcement of the law and the prevention and detection of crime is upheld.

In addition to that, it is not ethically or morally right to disclose information which may potentially endanger either members of the Force (Dog Handlers and their animals) or – by extension – members of the public who they are tasked to protect.

To disclose information which is likely to either cause harm to individuals or to assist offenders

would seriously undermine the effective delivery of operational law enforcement and is therefore exempt from disclosure.

Please Note

Whilst this last part of your request is exempt, under our Section 16 duty to be as helpful as possible to an applicant, I am happy to provide the following clarification to you which you may find useful :-

- a) Handlers complete all of their training in line with the ACPO Police Dog Manual of guidance, which has been superseded this month by the National Canine Training and Accreditation Scheme. The detail contained within both includes tactics on deployment as well as training methods.
- b) Handlers undertake a 13-week initial course and are independently assessed at the end of that course.
- c) They must attend a minimum number of training days annually
- d) They need to attain an accreditation annually.

Also under our Section 16 obligation to be as helpful as possible to an applicant, please find below links to both the ACPO Police Dog Manual of Guidance and the National Canine Training and Accreditation Scheme :-

www.cinotecniamilitar.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/201103uopdogsmog1-1.pdf

www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-canine-training-and-accreditation-scheme-private-security-industry

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

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,

Nick Penny
Decision Maker

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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



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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.

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

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/>

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