

**Force Disclosure Unit**

Wiltshire Police HQ

London Road

Devizes

Wiltshire

SN10 2DN

Tel 101 ext 62005

www.wiltshire.police.ukdisclosure@wiltshire.pnn.police.uk

XXXXXX – by email

Date: 7th April 2025

Your ref: FOI

Our ref: FOI 2025 / 331

Reply contact name is: Nick Penny

Dear XXXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 21st March 2025 concerning Deaths in Custody etc.

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 not obliged to supply the information you have requested.

You wrote:

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 from the Police. I would like to request all the information you have regarding deaths in police custody from 2013-2025.

I am looking for details including statistics regarding:

1. Deaths in custody.
2. Deaths involved in police chases.
3. Deaths due to police use of force.
4. Deaths from the line of duty.
5. Statistics regarding which of these accidental deaths in police custody were referred to the IOPC for investigation.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Our response:

Certain information that you are requesting (namely questions 2 and 3) is not stored in a way which permits easy retrieval.

This information is recorded within our main complaints database Centurion and also – for the older records – held in manual paper files held in the department or stored in various archive facilities around the Force.

As it stands currently, details of any member of the public who receives an injury that is more than an ABH whilst they are subject of police contact (or recent contact with the police) are passed to our Professional Standards Department. The PSD Team then enter details of that injury onto our Centurion database and assess whether it fits the criteria for being referred to the IOPC.

Whilst all injury matters are recorded on Centurion as MI (Miscellaneous) Cases, unfortunately there is no common methodology or practice for recording death or serious injury cases (DSI) within Centurion – which leads to Forces using a level of interpretation and their own way(s) of recording instances of this nature. In practice, some deaths may have been recorded under the MI category whilst others will remain unflagged and therefore not easily searchable.

Unfortunately, Centurion is – however - an old legacy database which :-

- does not contain all the information you require
- is not only cumbersome to use and run searches on
- there is a high volume of information contained within it which has not been coded correctly over time for one reason or another

and, as such, any searches based on specific parameters and/or key fields cannot be trusted to produce accurate results, irrespective of the older information held in paper files.

Our PSD Team have undertaken searches of MI Cases logged on our system but the results generated omit a number of death cases known anecdotally to the PSD Office Manager – which demonstrates the inaccuracy of automated searches for the information you require.

Our PSD Office Manager has confirmed that the only way to identify the information held within Centurion that relates to questions 2 and 3 would be to access, read and review each complaint cases logged on the database to see if it met your criteria. Given the number of complaint cases involved, I have been assured that merely reviewing the cases held on Centurion alone - and ignoring those older cases held in paper files - this exercise would by far exceed the time obligations upon this authority to comply, and in so doing would exceed the fees limits. This is set at £450 calculated at a flat rate of £25 per hour for those work activities comprising of confirming the information is held, locating it, retrieving it and extracting it.

Please also note that if one part of the request engages a Section 12 response, the whole request will engage a Section 12 response. The reason being is due to the fact that locating, retrieving and extracting any further information (eg that held in paper files) would only add to the already exceeded time obligations.

Although excess cost removes the forces' obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, as a gesture of goodwill I have supplied information, relative to your request, retrieved or available before it was realised that the fees limit would be exceeded. I trust this is helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request. What I am able to provide you are the answers documented below :-

Question 1

During the time period you have requested, there has been 1 instance of a death in custody – this was in 2019.

Question 4

During the time period you have requested, there have been 6 instances of deaths of officers in the line of duty within Wiltshire Police. These were as follows :-

2016	1
2017	2
2018	1
2022	2
2023	1

Question 5

It is Force policy that any deaths of individuals in police custody are automatically referred to the IOPC. I can confirm that the one instance we have recorded was duly referred.

Ordinarily under our section 16 duty to provide advice and assistance, we would advise you how to refine your request in respect of questions 2 and 3 to a more manageable level. However, due to the difficulties outlined above, I cannot see how this can be achieved in this particular case.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Wiltshire Police, when refusing to provide such 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.

The exemption applicable to the information requested is:

Section 12: Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

- (1) Section 1(1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit.

In accordance with section 17 of the Act, this letter represents a Refusal Notice for this particular request.

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
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.pnn.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