



Police Headquarters
London Road
DEVIZES
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN

Your ref: FOI

Our ref: FOI 2025/999

I write in connection with your request for information dated 20/10/2025 concerning digital forensics.

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'd like to request the following information under the FOI Act. It concerns investigations which involve digital forensics.

1. How many staff in your force/contractors are currently assigned to work on digital forensics (examining digital devices seized for evidence as part of investigations).
2. What is the current average time it takes to examine a device (from seizing to completion).
3. What is the current backlog of digital devices which your force needs to examine. Could I also have a breakdown of devices - ie phones, ipads etc
4. How many current investigations involve examining digital devices and what percentage of your total number of ongoing investigations is this?
5. What is the current waiting time for the device which has been waiting to be investigated the longest and what kind of allegation/investigation does this relate to?
6. If a contractor firm is used to carry out this work, could I please ask what it is and how much the firm is paid.
7. If the cost limit has not yet been reached, could I please ask what the answer was to question two in each of the most five recent calendar years. (IE) 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020.
8. If the cost limit has still not been reached, could I please ask for the answer to question three for 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020. Please provide an average backlog figure.

Response:

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The information you require for the second part of question 3 (could I also have a breakdown of devices - ie phones, ipads etc) and question 4 is not stored in a way which allows for easy retrieval. To establish the data for the second part of question 3 would involve a manual check of records held. To establish the data for question 4 would require a manual peruse of each case.

Under the circumstances I am absolutely confident that to locate, retrieve and extract the information you seek 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. Therefore, the whole of the request falls under the exemption of section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Please note:

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 would only add to the already exceeded time obligations.

Forces may use different recording systems; therefore it may be possible some Forces can provide this information where others cannot.

Ordinarily under our Section 16 obligation to provide advice and assistance we would advise you of a way to refine the second part of question 3 and question 4 to a more manageable level. Due to the difficulties in obtaining the requested information, as outlined above, I cannot think of a way in which this could be achieved.

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 can provide you with is documented below:

Q1 - 19

Q2 - The median processing time (days) from submitted to completed is 197

Q3 - current backlog of digital devices which your force needs to examine 166

Q5 - The oldest case in the queue is 38 weeks.

Relates to online grooming/Possession/Distribution of Child Abuse Material

Q6 - Over the last 12 months we have outsourced

The total budget for outsourcing over the past 12 months was: £211,682

Q7 2020 – 171

2021 – 123

2022 – 50

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2023 – 75

2024 – 118

Q8 - We can provide the number of CASES in the queue as of December for each year. A case can contain multiple exhibits.

2020 – 140

2021 – 124

2022 – 155

2023 – 147

2024 – 65

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Wiltshire Police, 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 12: Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

Please contact me if you would like to discuss the withheld information.

Yours sincerely

Maria Evans

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



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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 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
Keeping Wiltshire Safe

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