

WILTSHIRE POLICE



XXX
Sent via email: XXX



Police Headquarters
London Road
DEVIZES
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN

Date: 08/06/26

Our ref: FOI 2026/444

Reply contact name is: XXX

Dear XXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 12/05/26 concerning crimes involving 3D printers.

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:

Good morning. I am making a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000).

- How many cases have involved 3D printers in each of the last 4 years?
- How many of these led to a conviction?
- How many instances of 3D printers being used to create illegal weapons, or parts for illegal weapons, have been investigated in each of the last 4 years?
- How many of these led to a conviction?

Response:

The request asks how many cases have involved 3D printers in each of the last four years. Although the request is not offence specific, it spans a wide range of crime types and therefore raises different considerations depending on the nature of the information sought.

Keeping Wiltshire Safe

In relation to any information concerning cases linked to 3D-printed illegal weapons, the force can neither confirm nor deny whether such information is held. Confirming or denying the existence of information in this area would, in itself, reveal information about policing activity and sensitive law-enforcement matters, which could prejudice the prevention and detection of crime and undermine operational effectiveness. This position is adopted to ensure consistent handling and to avoid information being inferred through comparison of responses.

In relation to cases involving 3D printers across all other crime types, the force does not record the involvement of 3D printers in a consistent or searchable manner. Identifying whether any such cases exist would require a manual review of large volumes of individual crime and investigation records across multiple systems and years. The time and resources required to undertake this work would be disproportionate, and the force is therefore unable to comply with this element of the request.

Under the circumstances I am 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.

These two positions address different issues raised by the request. Information relating to illegal weapons is withheld due to sensitivity, while information relating to other crime types cannot be identified without disproportionate effort due to the way records are structured. This does not indicate that one category of information is more readily searchable than another, nor does it confirm whether any specific information is held.

The force has considered whether it can provide advice to assist the applicant. However, given the breadth of the request and the way information is recorded, it is not possible to suggest refinement that would enable the force to provide a meaningful response without encountering the same issues outlined above.

Some information relating to the criminal use of 3D-printed firearms has previously been placed into the public domain through media reporting and public statements. However, this does not mean that the force can confirm or deny whether it holds information that would answer the specific questions asked in this request. Accordingly, the force can neither confirm nor deny whether it holds any further information relating to cases involving 3D-printed firearms beyond what is already publicly available. Confirming or denying this would risk revealing information about the extent, frequency or focus of law-enforcement activity in this area.

Confirmation or denial that information is held would identify local-level policing activity relating to the investigation, detection, or seizure of 3D-printed weapons. This would risk revealing the level of police awareness, intelligence holdings, and operational focus in relation to such weapons within the force area.

When this request is made to multiple police forces, there is a further and more significant risk. Confirmation or denial by individual forces would allow responses to be compared, enabling a picture to be built of where national and local investigations and operations are taking place, and potentially where they are not. This mapping or “mosaic” effect would undermine the effective delivery of law enforcement by revealing intelligence gaps, operational priorities, or areas of reduced activity in relation to 3D-printed firearms.

Such disclosure would compromise the integrity of policing operations by exposing sensitive intelligence relating to the force's response to emerging weapons threats. This could adversely affect ongoing or future investigations, some of which may be covert, and would reduce the effectiveness of law-enforcement activity.

Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is considered a disclosure to the world at **large**. Whilst the motives of the applicant are not questioned, any information released would be equally accessible to criminals, including serious and organised crime groups and individuals involved in terrorist activity. It is widely recognised that such groups monitor FOI disclosures to identify policing capabilities, gaps, and vulnerabilities that may be exploited to further criminal activity.

The threat of terrorism cannot be ignored. The UK continues to face a sustained threat from violent extremism, and any information that identifies the focus, scale, or effectiveness of policing activity relating to weapons offences has the potential to place public safety at risk and undermine national security.

Any information that could be used to infer the level of policing activity, intelligence capability, or operational focus in relation to 3D-printed illegal weapons would therefore prejudice both local and national law-enforcement efforts.

Public Interest Considerations

Section 24(2) – National Security

Factors favouring compliance with section 1(1)(a) - There is a public interest in transparency and accountability in relation to policing and national security matters. Disclosure could contribute to public understanding of how threats are managed and how policing resources are deployed to address emerging risks involving weapons.

Factors against compliance with section 1(1)(a) - There is a very strong public interest in safeguarding national security and protecting the public from harm.
Keeping Wiltshire Safe

Confirming or denying whether information is held would risk undermining counter-terrorism and serious crime operations by revealing sensitive intelligence, operational focus, or investigative capability. Any such disclosure could be exploited by those seeking to cause harm, increasing the risk to the public and to police officers.

Section 31(3) – Law Enforcement

Factors favouring compliance with section 1(1)(a) - There is a public interest in openness and in increasing awareness of criminal threats involving weapons. Disclosure could, in theory, contribute to public vigilance and the reporting of suspicious activity.

Factors against compliance with section 1(1)(a) - Confirming or denying whether information is held would prejudice the prevention and detection of crime by revealing law-enforcement tactics, intelligence focus, or operational priorities. Even limited disclosures can contribute to a cumulative mosaic effect, whereby multiple pieces of information are assembled to reveal sensitive operational detail. This would undermine the effectiveness of policing and increase the risk of harm to the public.

Balancing Test

While there is a public interest in transparency, this is outweighed by the strong public interest in protecting national security, preserving the integrity of law-enforcement operations, and safeguarding the public. Confirming or denying whether information is held would risk revealing sensitive intelligence relating to the policing of weapons offences, including the scale, focus, or effectiveness of operations involving 3D-printed firearms.

The cumulative risk created by confirmation or denial, particularly when responses from multiple forces are compared, is significant. Any such disclosure would contribute to an intelligence picture that could be exploited by criminals or terrorists.

On balance, the public interest favours maintaining neither confirm nor deny position. No inference can be drawn from this response as to whether information is held or not held.

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 24(2) – National Security

Section 31(3)-Law Enforcement

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.

Please 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 because locating, retrieving and extracting any further information would only add to the already exceeded time obligations.

I am satisfied that all the relevant information has been passed on 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.

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