

**Information Governance Unit
Information Management Branch**

8 August 2008

Dear **XXXX**,

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: XXXX

I write in connection with your request for information dated 11/07/2008, for the following information:

- 1a. For the last five years please list the numbers of police officers serving at each rank on the 1st April for each year.
- 1b. Please list the number of Muslim officers serving at each rank for the same periods.
- 1c. Please list the number of Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) officers serving at each rank for the same periods.

2. For the last five years please list the numbers of, a) officers serving; b) Muslim officers serving; and c) BME officers serving in each of the following specialisms on April 1st
 - 2a. CID
 - 2b. Counter-Terrorism
 - 2c. Firearms
 - 2d. Special Branch

3. In each of the last five financial years:
 - 3a. How many officers served in your force?
 - 3b. How many officers resigned from your force? How many officers were dismissed from your force?
 - 3c. How many BME officers resigned from your force? How many BME officers were dismissed from your force?
 - 3d. How many Muslim officers resigned from your force? How many Muslim officers were dismissed from your force? .

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police to locate information relevant to your request. I can confirm that some of the information you have requested is held by Greater Manchester Police.

Result Of Searches

Question 1a & 1c. Please see attached information.

Question 1b. Under S1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act I am obliged to firstly confirm whether the information you have requested is held by this authority or not. In this case the information to fully answer your request is not held, so cannot be provided.

There is no requirement to prescriptively gather this information, and in addition to any Data Protection Act breaches, articles 2, 8, 9 and 14 of the Human Rights Act are also relevant. Admittedly, for the purposes of minority monitoring some officers and staff do provide this information on a voluntary basis, although that is an incomplete picture and does not answer your request.

The religion of an individual is defined as 'sensitive personal data' within the Data Protection Act, and even if it were held, a disclosure of that information could only be made if Schedule 3 of that act applied, which is not the case here. I should therefore advise you, that not only is all the information you have requested not being provided because it is not held, any subsequent request asking for what has been provided voluntarily would be exempt by virtue of S40(2) of the FOIA. This is a Class Based, Absolute Exemption.

Please be assured that all police employees, be they officers or staff, are vetted at an appropriate level to their role. The vetting process is effective, prescriptive and well established, following national standards and guidelines.

The inference of your request is that religious membership monitoring of staff should be carried out routinely. There is no requirement for this to be a standard procedure for the reasons outlined. There could be a suggestion that these types of questions have racial connotations. The police service does not support any stereotypical views that an individual's religion, beliefs, sexual orientation or gender should in any way be linked to criminal activity, including terrorism.

Question 2a-2d. Information relating to the number of officers, working within the requested specialist departments is exempt by virtue of the following exemptions, s31(1) which is Law Enforcement and s24(1) National Security, both these exemptions are qualified and prejudiced based, which means that evidence of harm and the public interest needs to be articulated. (Please see pages 2-3).

Question 3a – 3c. Please see attached information.

Question 3d – Please see answer at question 1b.

Harm in Disclosure

To produce the number of officers working in these specialists areas will be a disclosure of intelligence useful to a terrorist or individuals with criminal intent. By mapping the capabilities in various force areas a clear picture can be produced showing where resources are concentrated. If this information was provided over an extended period, terrorist groups or other individuals could draw conclusions on any increase or decrease in the staffing levels, leading to possible identification of ongoing operations or changes in proactive focus of forces. The usefulness of this data can be even more impactful when linked to other information gathered from sources by the terrorist and other criminals. These can include media releases, high profile investigations and the tactical infrastructure of a force area including how many vulnerable premises, points of entry to the UK and protection liabilities they have. Any incident that results from such a disclosure will then by default affect local policing and national security.

Public Interest Test

Factors Favouring Disclosure.

Accountability

The disclosure of the figures will show that the force takes seriously its Counter-Terrorism, CID, Firearms and Special Branch functions and resources accordingly.

Public Debate

The information will aid the accuracy of any public debate on whether public money is being invested appropriately and in line with public opinion.

Factors favouring Non-Disclosure

Efficient and Effective Conduct of the Force

Disclosure is likely to compromise the law enforcement capability of the force. Resource information can give an advantage to someone looking to exploit any potential weaknesses in a forces tactical planning. Any increased activity as a result of that either real or perceived weakness will mean the diversion of other resources or a reduction in the capability of the force.

Public Safety

Any disclosure which may increase the risk of harm being caused in the public arena is not desirable. In this case individuals with criminal intent or terrorist being attracted to an area they perceive is less well protected than others will increase the risk of harm to the public. Fear of detection is an important tool in preventing incidents taking place.

Balancing Test

There is a requirement in any public interest test to balance the factors favouring disclosure with those against. The police service is already held to account on how it uses its resources, on behalf of the public, by Police Authorities and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. Those processes are effective and long standing and are not enhanced by any disclosure in this case.

In the current climate within the UK, no information which may aid a terrorist should be provided. Hindsight is a wonderful gift that we are not in possession of at this time. To what extent this information will actually aid individuals with criminal intent or a terrorist is unknown, but discretion is our most effective tool. The public entrust the Police to make appropriate decisions with regard to their protection, and the only way of reducing the risk is to be ultra cautious. At this time, in these circumstances, it is undesirable to provide the exact number of officers and staff working specifically in the requested specialist departments.

Complaint Rights

Your attention is drawn to the attached sheet, which details your right of complaint.

Should you have any further inquiries concerning this matter, please write or contact me, on telephone number 0161 856 2528 quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,