



Date: 19/07/2023
Our ref: 01/FOI/23/002494/P

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/23/002494/P

I write in connection with your request for information dated 21/06/2023, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act. I am looking for information about money paid to police informants. Please could you provide me with the following:

1. How much money, in pounds sterling, has the force paid police informants – known as Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) – in the past three financial years? (Please could the figures be broken down year-by-year and be provided for 2022/23, 2021/22, 2020/21).

For each financial year please could the total amount paid to Covert Human Intelligence Sources be stated, as well as the number of Covert Human Intelligence Sources who received payment.

2. What was the largest amount paid to an informant/ Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) by the force in each year? Please provide the amount of the largest payment to an informant each financial year.

Please note, the amount should include the total of all payments to the informant in one financial year – for example, if the same informant received several payments in the financial year, please could the total amount for those payments be provided.

Result of Searches

Greater Manchester Police can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any information as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply by virtue of the following exemptions:

- **Section 23(5) Information Supplied by, or concerning, certain Security Bodies**
- **Section 24(2) National Security**
- **Section 30(2) Investigations and Proceedings Conducted by Public Authorities**
- **Section 38(1) Health and Safety**

Section 23(5) is an absolute exemption and as such no public interest test is required.

Section 24(2) and Section 30(2) are class based qualified exemption and there is a requirement to consider the public interest to ensure neither confirming nor denying information is held is appropriate.

Section 38(1) is a prejudice based qualified exemption; there is a requirement to articulate the harm that would be caused in disclosing such information as well as carrying out a public interest test, which can be seen below

Harm for neither confirming nor denying that any other information is held for Sections 24 and 31

Any release under the Freedom of Information Act is a disclosure to the world, not just to the individual making the request. To confirm or deny whether information is held pertinent to this request would reveal whether Greater Manchester Police has received variations of intelligence from Covert Human Intelligence Sources from different timeline. Police forces work in conjunction with other agencies and information is freely shared in line with information sharing protocols. Modern-day policing is intelligence led and this is particularly pertinent regarding both law enforcement and national security. The public expect police forces to use all powers and tactics available to them to prevent and detect crime or disorder and maintain public safety. The prevention and detection of crime is the foundation upon which policing is built and the threat from terrorism cannot be ignored. It is generally recognised that the international security landscape is increasingly complex and unpredictable. The current UK threat level from international terrorism, based on intelligence, is assessed as substantial which means that a terrorist attack is likely. To counter criminal and terrorist behaviour, it is vital that the police have the ability to work together, where necessary covertly, to obtain intelligence within current legislative frameworks to assist in the investigative process to ensure the successful arrest and prosecution of offenders who commit or plan to commit acts of terrorism. To achieve this goal, it is vitally important that information sharing takes place between police officers, members of the public, police forces as well as other law enforcement bodies within the United Kingdom. Such action would support counter terrorism measures in the fight to deprive terrorist networks of their ability to commit crime. In addition, to confirm or deny whether information is held in this case has the potential to undermine the flow of information (intelligence) received from CHIS as well as members of the public into the Police Service relating to these types of offenders thereby undermining National Security and leaving the United Kingdom at risk of more terrorist attacks.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring confirming or denying that any other information is held for Section 24

Confirmation or denial that any other information exists relevant to the request would lead to a better informed public and the public are entitled to know how public funds are spent by the police on the utilisation of CHIS. The information simply relates to national security and disclosure would not actually harm it.

Factors against confirming or denying that any other information is held for Section 24

Other organisations outside the police service are also widely engaged in utilising and rewarding informants in several ways, and therefore by confirming or denying that any information exists relevant to the request would harm the close relationship that exists with such organisations, where trust and confidence in this specific area has been built up in the exchange of information and financial assistance during the Criminal Justice process. To confirm or deny whether Greater Manchester Police hold any information would allow inferences to be made about CHIS used and the nature and extent of national security related activities which may or may not take place in a given area. This could enable terrorist groups to take steps to avoid detection, and as such, confirmation or denial would be damaging to national security. By confirming or denying any policing arrangements of this nature have occurred would render national security measures less effective. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or infra-structure of the UK and increase the risk of harm to the public.

s30(2) - Investigations and Proceedings Conducted by Public Authorities

Public Interest Test:

Factors favouring disclosure:

There is information within the public domain confirming that police use covert human intelligence sources to assist them with investigations and the effective delivery of law enforcement. Disclosure would enhance the public's knowledge about how information relating to informants is used by Greater Manchester Police and how the intelligence received assists in day-to-day investigations and operations to assist the prevention and detection of crime and the apprehension and prosecution of offenders. Disclosure would also assist in stopping any incorrect rumours or falsehoods relating to how the police store and manage how informants assist the police. It would also allow the public to determine whether the financial outlay by the force to informants is appropriate in comparison to the level of successful prosecutions.

Factors favouring non-disclosure:

Disclosure of the information requested could identify informant activity within a force area. Over a period, if several disclosures were made, individuals could analyse the information and identify any sudden peaks or troughs in informant activity. This would hinder the prevention and detection of crime and prejudice our ability to maintain confidential sources. Consequently, the force's future law enforcement capabilities would be affected. Similarly, the disclosure of the information would highlight when informants have been used which could place those persons, or those suspected of being an informant, in danger. The disclosure of this information

would lead to informants losing confidence in Greater Manchester Police and would impede the recruitment of informants in the future.

S38(1) – Health and Safety

Harm

CHIS, regardless of their motivation, provide information at personal risk to themselves and their families. As previous cases have shown, where a CHIS is identified it can result in substantial physical harm or mental trauma resulting from the threat of physical harm. This problem is particularly acute in cases relating to serious crime and terrorism where the threat against individuals is substantial.

The health and safety of any individual is a matter of significant concern and importance to Greater Manchester Police. Release of any information that could place an informant at risk of identification and thus risk of physical or mental harm is not suitable for disclosure.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure:

Release of the information would promote openness and transparency of records held by Greater Manchester Police.

Factors favouring non-disclosure:

The release of any information could lead to identification of any individual and consequently endanger the safety, potentially the life, of an individual.

Balancing Test

There is information within the public domain confirming that police use covert human intelligence sources to assist them with investigations and the effective delivery of law enforcement. The Police Service is tasked with protecting the community we serve and solving crime and there is a public interest argument in ensuring we are open and transparent regarding policing investigations and operations. There is no doubt that for the issues outlined above any disclosure relating to sensitive informant information would jeopardise those important roles. Informants play a vital role in assisting the police and is based very much on relationships built on trust and the expectation of complete confidentiality Greater Manchester Police would never disclose information which would compromise our tactics or compromise the safety of an individual. It is therefore our opinion that the balance lies in favour of non-disclosure of the information.