

Date: 30th October 2023
Our ref: FOI/23/011422/A

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: FOI/23/011422/A

I write in connection with your request for information dated 03/10/2023, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

Dear Sir/Madam

Under Freedom of Information Act, I would like to request the following information:

Q1 Dog attacks by year since 2015 including; non-reported breeds, suspected breeds and confirmed breeds.

Q2 Dog seizures by year since 2015 including; non-reported breeds, suspected breeds and confirmed breeds.

Q3 Reports/calls of dangerous dogs from the public that resulted in seizure / action by year since 2015 including; non-reported breeds, suspected breeds and confirmed breeds.

Q4 Reports/calls of dangerous dogs from the public that did not result in seizure / action by year since 2015 including; non-reported breeds, suspected breeds and confirmed breeds.

Q5 Confirmation that trained dog handlers attended any call out to dogs. If not, the reasons as to why and the result of the call out.

Q6 The number of trained dog handlers in your force.

I would like you to provide this information in the following format:

- Table or bullet point format.***

Result of Searches

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to locate the requested information and I can confirm the information requested is held by GMP. However, I am not obliged to provide all the information requested as exemption applies.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Greater Manchester 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

Question 6 has been exempt from disclosure by virtue of the following exemption:

Section 31(1)(a)(b) – Law enforcement

Section 31 is a qualified and prejudice-based exemption and as such, subject to a harm and public interest test.

Harm

Disclosure of the number of Police Officers and staff in specific areas of policing reveals tactical capability and vulnerabilities from force to force and would compromise the efficient and effective conduct of Greater Manchester Police. To disclose operational strength would hinder Greater Manchester Police in law enforcement capabilities.

The safety of the public is of a paramount importance to Greater Manchester Police and to release the number of specially trained police officers that are specifically dedicated to dog handling would compromise the safety of the public that Greater Manchester Police serve to protect.

Furthermore, this would impact on the law enforcement capabilities of Greater Manchester Police in the prevention and detection of crime and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders. This would also give an advantage to that are intent on committing crimes and avoid detection.

Factors in favour of disclosure

To disclose how many specialist roles there are within this area of policing would show accountability of Greater Manchester Police in performing a key policing function. Disclosure would encourage public awareness and debate and may reduce crime or lead to more information being provided to Greater Manchester Police from the public for the prevention and detection of crime. Disclosure could be seen how Greater Manchester Police are using its resources to prevent crime.

Furthermore, there is always a need to disclose information which relates to the spending of public money. It is in the public's interest to see how resources are balanced across Greater Manchester Police.

Factors against disclosure

To disclose details of specially trained police officers that are specifically dedicated to dog handling would compromise the efficient and effective conduct of the force, especially the force's future law enforcement tactics being compromised. The safety of the public is of paramount importance to Greater Manchester Police and to release the requested information would compromise the safety of the community that Greater Manchester Police serve to protect and place individuals at risk.

Disclosure would lead to a greater impact on police resources, in that this could hinder the prevention and detection of crime and more crime being committed. It would give advantage to those individuals intent on criminal activity as it may assist potential criminals in evading the police as more vulnerable areas of lower policing levels would become evident. A fear of crime will be realised as criminals identify vulnerable areas and target and exploit these areas resulting in the public being in fear of more criminal activity occurring.

Balancing Test

When balancing the public interest Greater Manchester Police has to consider whether the information should be released into the public domain. Arguments need to be weighed against each other. The most

persuasive reason for disclosing the information would be Greater Manchester Police's accountability. This needs to be weighed against the strongest reason for non-disclosure which is the police service is charged with enforcing the law; preventing and detecting crime and protecting the people/communities we serve.

In this case this is the fact that individuals may be placed at risk and the affect it may have on the prevention and detection of crime. In this case, I believe the case for disclosure is not made out.

The police will not divulge any information that would place the safety of an individual at risk or undermine law enforcement. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing, and in this case providing assurance that the police service is appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat posed by criminal activity, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the tactical resource capability which could highlight which forces are focussing more on this type of investigation than other force areas.

In accordance with the Act, this letter represents a Refusal Notice for the particular piece of information.

Response to remaining questions

Question 1

Caveats:

In July 2019, GMP implemented one of the largest IT infrastructure changes in UK policing. The systems are in continual development and the data provided for this request is what the systems currently hold.

- This data contains crimes under Home Office code 008/21 - Owner or person in charge allowing a dog to be dangerously out of control in any place in England and Wales (whether in a public place or not) injuring any person or assistance dog, with a created date between 01 January 2015 and 18 October 2023, excluding cancelled crimes. Further information about cancelled crimes can be obtained from the Home Office Counting Rules.
- Management of Police Information regulations state that non-essential records should be removed from police systems six financial years after the year in which they were originally created. This means that data that is more than six financial years old may be incomplete and should not be compared to more recent data.

Year	Count of Crimes
2015	912
2016	987
2017	1076
2018	893
2019	837
2020	818
2021	922
2022	1258
2023	1260

Question 2

Dogs seized by year for DDA 1991 offences. This includes suspected section 1 dogs (banned), section 3 dogs, dangerously out of control or seized for both.

Year	No Dogs Seized
2015	177
2016	141
2017	141
2018	86
2019	113
2020	79
2021	84
2022	233
2023 up to 30/09/23	270

GMP started to record the breed of dog centrally in 2023 therefore we can only provide this information for 2023 up to 30/09/2023.

Please note that at present there is no confirmation of the XL or Pocket Bully that is accepted in this country. There are cross breeds when no main type of breed has been established. However, if a cross breed conforms mainly to one breed of dog we list it as such.

Breed	Total
XL Bully	62
Staffordshire Bull Terrier inc crosses	26
American Bulldog	23
Pit Bull Terrier type dog	16
GSD	13
English/British/Olde Bulldog	10
Pocket Bully	9
Akita	6
Cane Corso	5
Lurcher inc crosses	5
Malinois	5
Shah Pei	5
Dobermann inc crosses	4
Mastiff like dogs	3
Border Collie	3
Boxer inc crosses	3
Pomeranian	3
Dog De Bordeaux	3
Alapaha Blue Bulldog	3
Rottweiler inc crosses	3
Patterdale	2
French Bulldog	2
Jack Russell	1
English Bull Terrier	1
Pointer	1
Saint Bernard	1
Afghan Hound	1
Springer Spaniel	1
Shih Tzu	1
Breed/Type not Confirmed	11

Question 3

Same as per Q2. We record all the dogs seized in GMP.

Question 4

GMP do not record when a dog is not seized.

Question 5

No information held. This data is not retained.

Question 6

Exempt under Section 31. Please see above.