



Date: 19/09/2023
Our ref: 01/FOI/23/011232/W

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/23/011232/W

I write in connection with your request for information dated 22/08/2023, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

1. *From August 1st 2022 to July 31st 2023, how many parcels (ie. not a postcard, letter, or flat envelope) did your organisation receive? If the precise data isn't available, please provide an estimate.*

2. *From August 1st 2022 to July 31st 2023, how many letters did your organisation receive? If the precise data is not available, please provide an estimate.*

3. *From August 1st 2022 to July 31st 2023, how many mail items (including packages, letters, and flat envelopes) did you receive that were deemed 'suspicious'?*

This might include:

- *Parcels with protruding wires, aluminium foil, or oil stains*
- *Mail items emitting a peculiar odour*
- *Greasy or oily patches on the mail item*
- *Mail items sealed in such a way so as to encourage opening them at a particular end*
- *Unusually printed address that might include spelling errors*
- *Adverse physical reaction to the handling of the mail item – e.g., itching or irritation*
- *No return address or return address that cannot be verified*
- *Unusual postmark or no postmark*

4. *In relation to question 3, how many of these suspicious mail items actually contained something dangerous / unpleasant / illegal?*

This might include:

- *Substances and objects which may explode*
- *Gases which have been compressed, liquefied, or dissolved under pressure*
- *Flammable liquids and solids*
- *Biological substances*
- *Asbestos*
- *Controlled drugs and narcotics*
- *Corrosives*
- *Live creatures, insects, and invertebrates*
- *Waste, dirt, filth, or refuse*
- *Weapons and sharp objects*
- *Poisons, toxic liquids, solids, and gases*
- *Obscene publications or unlawful indecent images*

Please feel free to disregard this question if it will take too long to answer.

5. *In relation to question 4, how many of these mail items did your organisation report to the police?*

6. *From August 1st 2022 to July 31st 2023, how many unpleasant / threatening letters did your organisation receive?*

This might include:

- *Letters containing threats to the organisation or a member of the organisation*
- *Letters containing hate speech*
- *Letters containing blackmail*
- *Letters constituting harassment*

7. *If possible, what process do you have in place for receiving inbound mail?*

Please select all that apply.

- a) A record is kept of all packages and letters that arrived*
- b) All mail items are scanned on delivery*
- c) The mailroom is under 24/7 surveillance*
- d) All mail is tracked all the way to the end recipient (if an individual)*

Please feel free to disregard this question if it will take too long to answer.

Result of Searches

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police to locate information relevant to your request. I can confirm that the information you have requested is held by Greater Manchester Police, but I am not obliged to provide it all as exemptions apply.

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.

Information relating to this request for **question 7** is exempted under **Section 31(1)(a) – Law Enforcement**.

Section 31(1)(a) is a prejudice based and qualified exemption, therefore there is a requirement to articulate the harm that would be caused in disclosing any information held as well as carrying out a public interest test.

Harm

Disclosure of post room security procedures could reveal weaknesses in those security procedures. This could allow those with criminal intent to deduce our security procedures and could render GMP vulnerable to attacks via the postal or courier system. At present the UK faces a sustained threat from violent terrorists and extremists, and it is particularly important for this reason to also withhold data of this nature in order to prevent such individuals from mapping police capabilities, potentially identifying 'weak points'.

Factors in favour of disclosure

Greater Manchester Police recognises that there is a public interest in openness and transparency amongst Police Forces. The release of this information would allow for a more informed public debate of how money is spent within the Force and show how GMP is operating to ensure suspicious packages are intercepted and dealt with safely and efficiently.

Factors against disclosure

Details of the security procedures in place would aid a criminal intent on sending harmful items to GMP through the post or by courier. Knowledge of GMP security processes would provide an individual intent on making such attacks details of the processes used by Greater Manchester Police, therefore giving them an insight in to how to perform malicious activity against the Force. Consequently, this would jeopardise the force's key aim to prevent crime and would instead potentially facilitate crime to be more easily committed. This could have a knock-on effect to policing, due to the increased levels of resources that would be required.

Balance Test

Greater Manchester Police will not divulge any information that would place the safety of an individual at risk or compromise its ability to prevent or detect crime, or to apprehend or prosecute offenders. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing, and in this case providing assurance that the police service has appropriate security processes in place, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the integrity of those processes. Greater Manchester Police security processes are sensitive issues of intelligence value to criminals and therefore it is our opinion that for these issues the balancing test for disclosing the requested information is not made out.

Please find answers to the remaining questions below:

1. This information is not held by GMP.
2. This information is not held by GMP.
3. 0.
4. N/A
5. N/A
6. This information is not held by GMP.
7. This information is exempt, see above.