

Date: 17th December 2024
Our ref: FOI/24/013709/P

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: FOI/24/013709/P

I write in connection with your request for information dated 25/11/2024, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

To the Greater Manchester Police FOI Officer,

As someone with deep ties to the city and its history, I am greatly concerned about the recent dispersal order issued at 12:13 PM on Saturday, [23rd November 2024], which appears to have disproportionately targeted Gypsy, Romany, and Traveller communities in relation to Manchester's Christmas Markets, The Town Center and The Arndale shopping center.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I request the following information:

Details of the Authorisation:

1.) A copy of the written authorisation issued under Section 34 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, including the specific grounds provided for its enforcement.

1A.) The name and rank of the officer who authorised the order.

1B.) The "specified locality" and the duration for which the order was active.

Legal and Evidential Basis:

2.) Evidence or rationale used to determine the "reasonable grounds" for issuing the order, specifically regarding the likelihood of:

2a). Members of the public being harassed, alarmed, or distressed.

2b.) Crime or disorder occurring in the specified locality; 2b, i) What kind of crime that may be, or could be?

2b, ii) and any references to thought Crime - i.e. crimes that have not been committed but are suspected to be thought of in another's mind.

3.) An explanation of how Articles 10 and 11 of the Human Rights Act 1998 (freedom of expression and assembly) were taken into account during this decision-making process.

Impact and Enforcement:

4.) The number of individuals affected by the order, particularly in relation to age and ethnicity.

4a.) Any reports, complaints, or evidence of heavy-handed enforcement tactics, including the use of force or arrests.

Application of the Order:

5.) Clarification on whether Gypsy, Romany, and Traveller communities were explicitly or implicitly targeted.

6.) Details of any public communications or announcements made to justify this order.

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.

Question 1 – Please see the attached S34 Dispersal Notice.

Question 1a – Superintendent Phil Spurgeon

Question 1b – Please see the attached S34 Dispersal Notice.

Question 2a – Please see the attached S34 Dispersal Notice.

Question 2b – Please see the attached S34 Dispersal Notice.

Question 2b(ii) – None.

Question 3 – Invalid question under the FOIA. We are not obliged to provide opinions or explanations.

Question 4

Due to low numbers returned the ages have been merged into age groups as by providing all this information split by exact age as you have requested would significantly increase the likelihood of identifying the individual(s) concerned, and as such the exemption under S40(2) – Personal Information, would be engaged and result in information being refused. By merging this data, it can be provided in its entirety.

There were 31 subjects recorded. Of these 13 had ethnicity recorded all of which were noted as White. Age breakdown below.

Age Range	Total
10 – 15	12
16 – 20	13
21 – 30	3

31+	4
Grand Total	32

Question 4a – As of 02/12/2024, 57 complaint submissions have been made to GMP. 35 of the 57 reports have been flagged as being mainly about the treatment of people within train stations. The remaining have been grouped as 'General Police Response' and complaints include racial profiling, use of force and aggressive tactics.

Please note only 15 complaint submissions were people eligible to make a complaint. The rest had seen the matter online/social media and therefore ineligible, although they have been contacted and reassured that the matter is being examined. GMP has still logged these complaints.

Question 5 – Please see the attached S34 Dispersal Notice.

Question 6 – GMP issued 2 media releases on 23/11/2024.

Dispersal order issued in Manchester City Centre and beyond to prevent and tackle ASB

A Section 34 dispersal notice has been authorised across Greater Manchester. This equips officers with additional powers to prevent antisocial behaviour and deal with incidents more effectively.

There will be an increase in police presence across Greater Manchester with officers patrolling around key areas. They will be able to instruct and advise anyone who is causing, or very likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to leave an area immediately.

The order was put into place at 12:13pm today (23/11/2024) and will remain in effect for the next 48 hours.

This afternoon officers enforcing the order around Exchange Square arrested a man on suspicion of assaulting an emergency worker.

Superintendent, Phil Spurgeon within GMP's specialist operations unit said: "We are monitoring and managing a significant increase in footfall across Manchester City Centre and throughout our districts with groups of youth gathering together and causing disturbances.

"I have authorised a dispersal order under S34 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act across all Greater Manchester. This is in response to a rising number of reports and in the interest of protecting the public from excessive anti-social behaviour, disorder, and criminality over the weekend.

"This order should help visitors travel across GM with ease and enable residents to go about their daily activities.

"There will be an increase in police presence with neighbourhood officers deployed. If you have any concerns, please do approach them, they are there to keep you safe.

"If you see anything suspicious report it to police on 101. Always dial 999 in an emergency."

And in relation to an MEN enquiry about disproportionate policing of the Travelling community:

A spokesperson said: "We are responding to reports of hundreds of youths gathering in Manchester City Centre and causing disturbances for retail staff and patrons of the markets. Additional powers have authorised enabling officers to manage groups involved in anti-social behaviour more effectively,

and so far, we have issued 40 dispersal orders which instructs someone likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to leave an area immediately.”

Initial Authorisation for S34 Dispersal

The authority must be given by an Inspector or above - see Guidance Notes.

I (rank/PIN/name)	Supt Phil Spurgeon	
of	Specialist Operations	District/Branch
am satisfied on reasonable grounds that the use of these powers may be necessary for the purpose of removing or reducing the likelihood of— (a) members of the public in the locality being harassed, alarmed or distressed, or (b) the occurrence in the locality of crime or disorder.		
In (locality – clear boundaries with named streets and highlighted map)	 Impracticable to list all boundary streets. I have also authorised an overlapping city centre Dispersal power, and will create a separate Authorisation for that.	

Due to (summary of objective, incident references and intelligence-based grounds for belief)

Manchester Christmas markets on and city will be incredibly congested. On a Sat or Sun while markets are on, we usually see a large group of youths/young adults from the Traveller community attend the city centre for a social gathering. One year, they attended Trafford Centre. Groups typically number 300/400. While many of those attending are simply meeting and enjoying the city centre attractions, we typically see a significant number involved in anti-social behaviour and some crime. This has involved:

- Traveller males 'grabbing' Traveller females
- Disruption to roads and tram tracks, usually Exchange Square
- Some hate crime (abuse)
- Throwing of objects, including towards police; bottles were thrown last year
- Groups swarming police officers who attempt to engage or enforce Dispersal powers
- Disruption to markets and intimidation of staff and members of the public

The typical response from police has been to implement Dispersal powers, and attempt to enforce those with youths causing the most significant problems. This has required significant resources from GMP at a time of high demand elsewhere.

Mid-week, we received a report that Traveller youths would be attending the city centre this weekend, but it was unclear if that was Sat and/or Sun.

Today, initially via train companies, then BTP, information has been received about multiple groups of Traveller youths coming to Manchester. We have seen groups numbering 50-70 travelling on trains from Doncaster, York, Darlington so far, towards Victoria and Piccadilly train stations. Groups are described by BTP as committing ASB and drinking.

The city centre is already busy with those attending the Christmas markets. We also have significant number of football fans attending GM for fixtures at Rochdale, Bolton and MCFC. This presents additional dynamics and risks around having a large group of Traveller youths causing issues in the city centre.

I have briefed Bronze that Dispersal powers should not be used indiscriminately against Traveller youths in general, as they have a right to come to Manchester as other youths do from different communities. Dispersal should only be focused on those committing or we suspect will commit ASB that justifies excluding them from either the city centre, or GM.

Where groups are identified at railway stations and subject to Dispersal powers, Bronze is empowered using NDM and liaison with BTP, to consider option to direct to leave on rail network. Where this happens, and GMP staff get on trains to ensure Dispersal from GM, staff should only escort to GM boundary and no further.

I have authorized a GM-wide Dispersal power in addition to a city centre one, to give us options around individuals who have travelled from outside the GMP area. If we display dispersed them from the city centre, they would either go to other GM towns, Trafford Centre, or return back into the city centre.

NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

and I authorise any Constable in uniform within that locality to exercise powers under section 35 Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014			
From (time)	1213	On (date)	23/11/24
For a period of	48 hours	hours (not exceeding 48 hours)	
Signed	P. Spurgeon		
Date	23/11/24	Time	1406
ControlWorks Incident Number for Dispersal Order	1180 of 23/11/24		

Initial Authorisation for S34 Dispersal

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of	Specialist Operations	District/Branch
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In (locality – clear boundaries with named streets and highlighted map)	 I have also authorised an overlapping city centre Dispersal power, and will create a separate Authorisation for that.	

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For a period of	48 hours	hours (not exceeding 48 hours)	
Signed	P. Spurgeon		
Date	23/11/24	Time	1401
ControlWorks Incident Number for Dispersal Order	1180 of 23/11/24		