

Date: 28/06/2024
Our ref: 01/FOI/24/012806/L

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/24/012806/L

I write in connection with your request for information dated 18/06/2024, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

I have made contact with the college of policing and they have provided me with the response attached in the decision notice stating that they do not hold the package for GMPs Ethical Social Media and Online Communications e-learning training package (March 2023). This information is held by GMP only.

Please can you please send me the training package as I require this information urgently.

Clarification - Please can I have the slides on email. I am particularly interested in information relating article 8 right to a private life.

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 supply you with all the information held in the transcripts as an exemption applies.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Greater Manchester Police, when refusing to provide such information (because this 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.

Where redactions in the attached documents have been made, that information is 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

To provide the redacted information within the attached training transcript would reveal policing systems used by Greater Manchester Police. This would give an advantage to those that are intent on committing offences and avoid detection. It would also increase the risk of danger towards the public who GMP sworn to protect.

Public Interest Test

Factors Favouring Disclosure

To disclose the redacted information would provide the public with a slightly more in-depth knowledge into the systems used and how Greater Manchester Police operates. 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 Favouring Non-Disclosure

Conversely to the factors in favour of disclosure, to release the redacted information into the public domain would reveal the policing tactics of Greater Manchester Police. This would impact on the force's ability to detect and prevent crime and apprehend and prosecute offenders.

The risk of danger to the public would be increased by revealing such policing tactics into the public domain. The safety of the public we protect is of paramount importance to Greater Manchester Police and we would not wish to jeopardise that safety by releasing exempt information into the public domain.

Balancing Test

The arguments for and against disclosure of information need to be weighed against each other. In this case the greatest argument for disclosure is the fact that the public would be provided with information regarding how the force police operate.

However, given that the disclosure would increase the risk of increased crime to and assist those intent on committing crime to avoid detection the balance of disclosure, at this time, weighs on non-disclosure for those particular redacted parts of the policy requested.

This letter acts as a refusal notice for the redacted parts of the attached documents.

Results

As requested, please find attached a transcript of the training package listed above.

This link will take you to the schedule 1 detail. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2003/527/schedule/1>



The slide below references Article 8 of HRA but it is in the voice over and therefore should be in the transcript.





Ethical Social Media Transcript



Social media used properly can help Forces engage with their communities, build relationships, and gather vital information and intelligence. But where it is misused, it can cause untold damage to public confidence. We are seeing a growing number of cases where police officers have abused their position for sexual purpose and contacted vulnerable people using social media. This is not acceptable and has attracted custodial sentences.

We've also seen many cases where highly inappropriate content has been shared between groups of colleagues. This has included racist and misogynistic content. As a national lead for counter corruption, I want to ensure no one is left in any doubt that sharing inappropriate content can be a breach of the standards of professional behaviour, which can amount to misconduct or even a criminal offense.

We've created this short film to provide you with more information. Ethical, social media and online communications. Social media and online platforms are useful tools for the force. The following force principles apply, however, whenever you use them. You should have regard to these principles, The Standards of Professional Behaviour, and the Code of Ethics whenever you're using social media. Basically, the same professional standards apply to your online communications as they do your face to face, telephone or email communications.

Whether you're on or off duty, the standards of professional behaviour state that police officers and staff are to behave in a manner which does not discredit the police service or undermine public confidence, whether on or off duty (discreditable conduct). Police officers and staff report, challenge or take action against the conduct of colleagues which has fallen below the standards of professional behaviour expected.

Police officers and staff are expected to uphold the standards of professional behaviour in the police service by taking appropriate action if they come across the conduct of a colleague which has fallen below these standards. They never ignore such conduct. Challenging and reporting improper conduct. Police officers abide by



police regulations, enforce policies, and accept the restrictions on their private lives as described in Schedule one of the police regulations 2003.

These restrictions have to be balanced against the right to a private life, an officer's right to a private life is not absolute. Only to the point where it brings discredit on the police service as a whole or undermines public confidence (Article Eight Human Rights Act 1998). Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our policies or standards of professional behaviour.

So, what do we mean by social media? These principles apply to all social media platforms like Twitter, as well as communication platforms like WhatsApp. Do's and Don'ts do moderate your group conversations or leave those groups where communications are unacceptable? Remember, the content of private or group chats might not remain private. Take care in selecting the membership and regularly review.

If you are the group administrator. Careful consideration is required when including those within a group who are outside the organization. As officers retire, they are still often included in the group, leaving them privy to police information they are not entitled to be aware of. Keep social groups separate from any groups that share operational information. If you share operational information via social media platforms or online communication services, you must consider your disclosure responsibilities under the criminal procedures and Investigations Act.

The use of WhatsApp for policing purposes is prohibited due to potential insecurities of police information under the General Data Protection Regulation. GDPR principles officers are often part of a work group initially set up to arrange social events. However, these often lead to discussing incidents during which names and addresses are disclosed. For example, discussing how a lock up went leads to discussing who kicked off, discussing names on the outcomes they received, post arrest or court.

Officers may ask if anyone has a description of a certain wanted male mentioned on briefing as they think they have just seen them. Someone in the station then sends an image of said person from policing systems to the WhatsApp group, thus



breaching data protection. It is clear that this is being conducted with the right intention, but this is not the platform to share such information.

Forces have various systems in place to share such detail, such as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] or deal with inappropriate content or messages posted by force personnel on social media platforms or messaging services, as you would if their behaviour had occurred offline. The code of ethics places a positive obligation on you to do so. For example, memes being shared that are discriminatory.

They are often sent with the intention to be an attempt at humour but are not suitable for members of the police service. These are often being shared within a group of police colleagues or with mixed groups. This leaves the members open to complaints and investigation and places colleagues in a position to report the behaviour. Consider your responsibilities to declare any on one association that is one that is more than merely passing or casual under the Notifiable Association policy.

Don't send operational police information on personal electronic devices that is not supplied by force, including mobile phones, tablets and laptops. Don't use messaging services including Facebook, Messenger, Twitter, DM, Snapchat to send police information classified under the government security classification. Don't store police information on or transmit from personal devices. For example, officers were members of a WhatsApp group for [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. Officers have joined this on their personal devices. This means they are receiving police information to their personal phone at times off duty and then forwarding this information to other personal numbers. Personal devices should not be used to share operational information.

Don't share police information with those who do not require or have the authority to view it. Don't reveal the security clearances vetting levels of either yourself or that of other police service personnel. Don't post unprofessional comments criticizing other agencies or airing grudges with supervisors. There are professional internal channels for such matters. Such comments could internally damage morale and impact on public trust and confidence.



Consider if it's appropriate to comment on current social issues.

At times, these are heartfelt and well-intentioned attempts at defending the organization but can cause repercussions. For example, an officer was found to be posting and endorsing conspiracy theories linked to the coronavirus pandemic. For members of the community aware of their role due to it being all over social media, this damaged their confidence in the police and could have deterred people from seeking police support and or medical help.

Don't post insulting and abusive comments about ex-partners. If the public were aware of your role in the force or for example, any non-police colleagues on your friends list or any open profile, this could impact on public confidence for domestic abuse victims and criminal offenses may also be considered. Social media profiles accounts should be set to private with no reference to your role as a police employee or images of uniform, the station, or vehicles.

Care should be given to commenting on public posts on what public groups you are affiliated to. Consideration must be given to the risk to your family in identifying yourself as a member of the police service, including WhatsApp, i.e. photos that contain images of you with your partner and or children. Content comments or posts on social media. You must ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with your professional image as a police officer or member of police staff.

You must not undermine operational, investigative, or criminal justice processes. For example, be in contempt of court. Content must not contain information imagery, for example, video which is protectively marked as it could breach confidentiality or data protection laws don't breach copyright laws, for example, by using someone else's images without permission. Don't divulge sensitive operational and covert tactics. For example, public order tactics being deployed or covert techniques.

Don't provide details of an investigation or operation, particularly those involving covert tactics without [REDACTED] approval. Don't make defamatory or libellous comments or make discriminatory or bullying comments. Social media must not be capable of bringing the police service into disrepute, damaging the reputation of the organization and or undermining public confidence. If posting on behalf of the force in your policing role, the social media profile must be authorized by the force and the



posts in line with the policing objective with appropriate language and responses to comments used.

Consider the background of any images being posted. Is this disclosing police information? For example, videos being posted in Tik Tok style with good intentions, highlighting policing issues or engaging with popular trends to show community engagement, but utilizing an inappropriate choice of music such as rap or rock songs with offensive lyrics. Explicit Media. A number of members of the police family have been investigated for sharing explicit images or posting videos of themselves performing sexual acts for monetary gain online.

Again, consideration must be given to your behaviour off duty and how the public were perceived such behaviour. There have been instances of members sending sexual images within a police building or in partial uniform. This is unacceptable. Using work devices to take images. Phone camera app. Primarily, all evidential photography should be taken by CSI. Should there be a rationale recorded in pub or daybook for images taken using a works device?

They must be recorded via [REDACTED] or your force approved secure storage facility should there be an operational necessity to use the native camera, for example, urgent access to a camera during an incident to take images of evidence that may be lost due to inclement weather it can be used.

If the native camera is used and the images are evidential, they must be manually uploaded to [REDACTED] at the earliest opportunity, forensic advice sought, and additional images taken by CSI if possible. There are some exceptions where pictures may only require use of the native camera, such as to record health and safety concerns, incorrect signage or where the image has been taken for social media posting.

All images must not be retained on the mobile device for any longer than required, and in any case, no more than 30 days after which they must be deleted. It's your responsibility to ensure images are uploaded as required and deleted respectively, using a works device to take images. Impacts on the continuity and access of such images cannot be controlled.



For example, an officer attended a sudden death. They took a photograph of the deceased on their mobile phone, stating it was for evidential purposes. They later sent this image to a member of the public. The officer breached data protection by taking such an image and sharing it for no policing purpose. The sharing of such an image unnecessarily could cause distress to loved ones of the deceased.

Such behaviour could undermine public confidence and discredit the police service as a whole. This action amounted to misconduct in a public office due to the circumstances. In Police Scotland, the equivalent offense is wilful neglect of duty by a public official (common law). If you are in any doubt about the use of social media platforms or messaging service apps, seek advice from your line manager or refer to guidance on your force intranet regarding the use of social media.

Don't forget, remember to consider the standards of professional behaviour and the code of ethics whenever you're using social media. In essence, the same professional standards apply to your online communications as they do your face to face, telephone, or email communications, whether you're on or off duty.

Ethical Social Media Quiz.

1. A member of staff receives a WhatsApp message on their personal phone with the location of a stolen vehicle from the app [REDACTED]. They forward this information to traffic patrols on a WhatsApp group which was made up of the officer's personal numbers. The vehicle was subsequently located. Was this a misuse of messaging services?
2. An officer using an image of themselves in uniform on a dating site. Is this appropriate?
3. An officer attends a concern for welfare for a female who was feeling suicidal due to an ongoing child custody battle. The officer provides his personal mobile number and reassures the female that he would assist her with the ongoing matter. They exchange messages and meet to discuss the support available for her, both for her mental health and child contact. This leads to the officer asking if she wants to meet



for a movie and a takeaway. The officer collects her from hospital off duty due to her contacting him, asking for assistance.

The officer suggests the female contact model agency. The advert for which shows females acting as boxing ring girls in hot pants. This was due to her saying she wanted a model and was looking for employment. At what point did the officer breach the standards of professional behaviour?

A. When suggesting modelling? B. When collecting her from hospital? C. When providing her with his personal number or D. When asking for a movie and takeaway?

4. An officer posts comments on a photo of a previous supervisor, posted by a mutual friend on social media. Within the comment, he called them offensive names and referenced issues they had with shift patterns. This resulted in a number of other comments criticizing the supervisor. Although the profile was private, there were non-police friends on the profile who saw this content. The supervisor was caused upset by these posts. Was this an appropriate use of social media?

5. A member of staff sent images of themselves in various stages of undress, taken within a police building with a lanyard and name badge visible. These were sent to a colleague whilst on duty. What was this assessed as by the Professional Standards Branch?

A. No PSB action required, B. Misconduct or C. Gross misconduct?

6. An officer attends a sudden death. They took photographs of the deceased on their mobile phone, stating that it was for evidential purposes. They later sent this image to a member of the public. What standards of professional behaviour does this breach?

A. Confidentiality? B. Authority, Respect and Courtesy, and Confidentiality? C. Discreditable Conduct, Authority, Respect and Courtesy, and Confidentiality? Or D. Duties and Responsibilities, Discreditable Conduct, Authority, Respect and Courtesy, and Confidentiality?