

Date: 30/10/2024
Our ref: 01/FOI/24/013543/L

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/24/013543/L

I write in connection with your request for information dated 28/10/2024, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

Q1) Please provide a list of all units/teams under your TAU

Q1.a) Please provide how many PCs, PSs & Inspectors per team and please specify what team you're referring to when answering

Q2) Please provide the rank & title for the senior officers overseeing the TAU (for example: Superintendent, Head of Tactical Aid Unit)

Q3) Please provide information on the type of vehicles the TAU use (for example: Response Cars, Unmarked Cars & Carriers)

Q4) How many TAU Teams/Units are on duty at one time providing coverage for the force

Q5) And lastly can you provide any links to any Force Documents/Policies relating to the Tactical Aid Unit

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 the information for questions 1-4 of this request 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

The following exemptions apply.

Section 40(2) Personal Information
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.

Sections 40 is a class based absolute exemption and there is no requirement to evidence harm or consider the public interest test.

Harm

A Freedom of Information Act request is not a private transaction. Both the request itself and any information disclosed, are considered suitable for open publication. This is because, under the Act, any information disclosed is released into the wider public domain, effectively to the world, not just to an individual. Whilst not questioning the motives of the applicant, by providing the number of Police Officers and staff in specific areas of policing and to provide the number of officers on shift at any given time/shift pattern 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 and the full list of vehicles in operation that are specifically dedicated to TAU 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 those intent on committing crimes and avoid detection.

Factors in favour of disclosure (S31)

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 (S31)

By disclosing the number of officers within the TAU and any other subsequence team would mean that there is a strong possibility that the current or future law enforcement role of the units will be compromised by the release of details. This would therefore, hinder the prevention and detection of crime. It can be argued that there are significant risks associated with providing information in relation the numbers per unit and how many TAU Teams/Units are on duty at one time providing coverage for the force since they may reveal the relative vulnerability of what we may be trying to protect.

It would give advantage to those individuals intent on committing crime 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.

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.

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 parts of information.

Please see the remainder of information which is not exempt below.

1. See exemption above
2. See exemption above.
3. See exemption above
4. See exemption above
5. No information held.