

Our ref: 01/FOI/24/013168/I

Please quote our reference
number when responding

Monday, 23 September 2024

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/24/013168/I

I write in connection with your request for information dated 25/08/2024, I note you seek access to the following information:

1. *How many serving police dogs do you currently have?*
2. *How many police dog handlers do you currently have?*
3. *How many police dog trainers do you currently have?*
4. *Please confirm the gender split of female and male police dog handlers?*
5. *Please confirm number of police dogs in your force which have died or been euthanised while still enrolled as a police dog (please include cause of death for each dog) from January 2020 until present.*
6. *How many police dogs have retired from the force since January 2020 until present day? Please include reason for retirement.*
7. *How many police dogs have been euthanised as they're deemed unsuitable for retirement since January 2020 until present day?*
8. *How many police dogs have failed their initial training course, and subsequently been re-homed or euthanised since January 2020 until present day?*
9. *What is the yearly expenditure for all police dogs?*
10. *Do your police dog handlers undertake canine first aid training? If so, how often are they provided a refresher course?*

11. *Are your police dogs supplied with personal protective equipment? If so, please state the equipment provided, brand of the equipment and confirm if it's personal issue to each serving police dog?*
12. *Are your police dogs provided with a direct financial assistance in their retirement from your police force or police crime commissioner?*
13. *How many suspects have been arrested by your force under 'Finn's Law' aka The Animal Welfare (Service Animals) for causing unnecessary suffering to a service animal since 8th June 2019 until present day?*
14. *How many suspects have been charged by your force under 'Finn's Law' aka The Animal Welfare (Service Animals) for causing unnecessary suffering to a service animal since 8th June 2019 until present day?*
15. *How many suspects have been convicted by your force under 'Finn's Law' aka The Animal Welfare (Service Animals) for causing unnecessary suffering to a service animal since 8th June 2019 until present day?*

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 some of the information you have requested is held by Greater Manchester Police.

1. Exempt under S31
2. Exempt under S31
3. 12
4. Exempt under S31
5. 2 – both due to becoming aggressive and turning on its handler and was unable to be rehomed.
6. 12 due to age.
7. As of 5.
8. No information held. We have a number of dogs that are handed in or assessed by the police as potential Police dogs and most are returned to the owner with no recorded information.
9. Exempt under S31
10. Handlers have basic first aid training and this is conducted on initial courses. In line with the new APP all handlers will have canine training yearly.
11. No
12. No

13. and 14. No information held. The data we hold cannot be specifically identified as the 'Finn's Law' records and we are unable to distinguish what data would meet your requirements.
15. GMP do not hold conviction data as this is held by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS). Please apply directly to HMCTS for such data.

Parts 1, 2, 4 and 9 have 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 current police dogs and relevant information that can identify the level of resources on this nature within the Force 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 police dogs 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

To disclose the number of current police dogs and relevant information that can identify the level of resources on this nature 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 regarding police dogs 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 Parts 1, 2, 4 and 9 of this request.