



Date: 03/04/2025
Our ref: 01/FOI/25/014184/L

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/25/014184/L

I write in connection with your request for information dated 10/02/2025, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

I'm writing under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request information about sodium nitrite.

Please tell me the following:

The number of incidents or crimes or reports received or attended by your police department referencing "sodium nitrite" or logged as relating to sodium nitrite.

In each case, please include a brief description which summarises what happened.

Please provide the results broken down by year for the past two years - 2023 and 2024, as well as the start of 2025, up to and including 10 February.

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 of the information held as exemptions apply.

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.

*The information you have requested is exempt from disclosure by virtue of the following exemption: **Section 31(1) – Law Enforcement.***

Section 31 is a qualified and prejudice-based exemption and as such, subject to a harm and public interest test.

Harm in respect of s31(1) Law Enforcement

The FOI Act is applicant blind which means that we cannot, and do not, ask about the motives of anyone who asks for information. In providing a response to one person, we are expressing a willingness to provide the same response to anyone. In this instance the information requested relates to the number of incidents and crimes received by, or attended by, GMP that reference sodium nitrate. This nitrate has been linked in recent media with self-harm incidents by ingestion in large quantities of it.

Crime reports for sodium nitrate are likely to only be reported as a theft or self-harm or forced self-harm incidents. The use of sodium nitrate could be used in big quantities by accident, but also on purpose. Disclosure of a total figure would reveal any ongoing investigations, which would have an undermining effect if any criminal matters are under inquiry, thus hindering the prevention and detection of crime.

To disclose the number of incidents or crimes relevant to one specific substance would set a precedent over disclosure in relation to any other named substances; revealing the viability of each substance set against any other. This would have an adverse risk on public safety, whether that means vulnerable members of society who seek to end their own life, or any other person with malicious intent.

Considerations in favour of disclosure – In recent media stories, sodium nitrate has been reported on with allegedly being related to multiple self-harm deaths following ingestion in large quantities of the product. Disclosure would be informative, and allow for wider public discussion over such matters.

Considerations in favour of withholding the information - Disclosure of information that undermines the operational integrity of law enforcement capabilities is highly likely to have an adverse impact on public safety and a negative effect on law enforcement generally. This risk to public safety cannot be said to be in the public interest.

Balancing Test - As much as there is public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced in matters of law enforcement, this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. Any disclosure which hinders our capability and assists criminals cannot be in the public interest.

It is for these reasons that I have determined that the balance test favours non-disclosure of the requested information.