



Date: 10/12/2025
Our ref: 01/FOI/25/015946/H

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/25/015946/H

I write in connection with your request for information dated 01/12/2025, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

I am writing to request access to all non-restricted information regarding the murder of 17-year-old Minnie Stott in Bolton on 16th November 1940.

This includes case files, crime/incident reports, witness statements, crime scene documentation, autopsy & medical records, photographs, interviews, physical evidence records, suspect identification, and any other information at all from the investigation that has taken place since.

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 requested as an exemption applies.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires GMP, 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 exemption which applies to this request is **Section 30(1)(2)(a) – Investigations and Proceedings Conducted by Public Authorities** and **Section 38(1)(a)(b) – Health and Safety**.

Section 30 is a class-based, qualified exemptions. There is a requirement to carry out a public interest test. Section 38 is a prejudice based, qualified exemption. There is a requirement to articulate the harm that would be caused in disclosing the information as well as carrying out a public interest test.

Harm – S38

The Freedom of Information Act provides the public with a general right of access to recorded information held by public authorities. However, information disclosed under this Act is effectively released into the public domain, or to the 'wider world', and not only to the person making the request.

The pain and suffering caused to the victims' surviving families and friends is unquestionably as profound now as it was when the crimes took place. To disclose the exempt information into the public domain would undoubtedly have an impact on the health and safety of the surviving family members of the victims. Disclosing such information could cause further distress and hurt to grieving families, many of whom would no doubt still be greatly traumatised by the events. Such information being disclosed could resurface these traumatic experiences and cause the victim's families to again revisit this most terrible period of their lives.

Protecting the safety of the public is of paramount importance to Greater Manchester Police and information that would compromise such health and safety would not be disclosed within a response to a Freedom of Information request.

Factors Favouring Disclosure – S30

To disclose the information requested into the public domain would show GMP's accountability and satisfy the public that investigations into this murder are being conducted. It would also show GMP's use of public funds in investigating cold cases and unsolved murders.

Factors Favouring Non-Disclosure – S30

We accept that there is a legitimate and important public interest in publishing information about the investigation however, conversely to the factors in favour of disclosure, to publicly release information that is related to investigations that remain ongoing may seriously undermine GMP's ability to complete the investigations to a full and correct conclusion.

Whilst these investigations might be seen as high profile by some, to disclose any details may still hinder the process needed to be followed.

Factors Favouring Disclosure – S38

There may be occasions when it is appropriate to disclose information that would have an impact on the health and safety of an individual or the public in general. In this particular case, I cannot identify any benefit to the wider public (in terms of health and safety) to disclose such sensitive details.

There are, however, more general arguments that must be considered such as openness and transparency, which would lead to a more informed public.

Factors Against Disclosure - S38

Although some information may already be in the public domain and that information relates to deceased persons, due to the nature of the crime committed, and that disclosure under Freedom of Information Act is disclosure to the world at large with no specific controls, disclosure carries the potential risk of causing significant mental and physical harm and distress to the loved ones and friends of the victim.

Balancing Test

When balancing the public interest test GMP must consider whether the information should be released into the public domain, therefore arguments need to be weighed against each other. The most persuasive reason for disclosing the information would be the fact that disclosure would encourage transparency. This needs to be weighed against the strongest reason for non-disclosure, which in this case is the impact on GMP's ability to complete investigations to a full and correct conclusion, and concerns for the health and safety, both mental and physical, of family and friends of the victim. Therefore, having considered all the factors for and against disclosure it is the decision at this time to maintain the above exemption and withhold the information from disclosure.

Information Access Unit, Information Management and Data Directorate,
Greater Manchester Police, Openshaw Complex, Lawton Street, Manchester, M11 2NS