

Date: 01/02/2025
Our ref: 01/FOI/25/014024/S

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/25/014024/S

I write in connection with your request for information dated 21/01/2025, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

The information I would be seeking is:

- 1. How many officers do you have within your firearms/ARV department?***
- 2. How many of these officers are male? How many of these officers are female?***
- 3. How many male officers within the firearms/ARV department are currently on a leave of absence due to stress/anxiety/mental health?***
- 4. How many female officers within the firearms/ARV department are currently on a leave of absence due to stress/anxiety/mental health?***
- 5. How many officers in total within the firearms/ARV department went on a leave of absence within the year of 2023 due to stress/anxiety/mental health?***
- 6. How many officers in total within the firearms/ARV department went on a leave of absence within the year of 2024 due to stress/anxiety/mental health?***
- 7. What current support does your force have in place to help all officers who are struggling with stress/anxiety/mental health?***
- 8. What current support does your force have in place to help all officers specifically within the firearms/ARV department?***

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 and 2 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

Questions 1 and 2 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 Police Officers specific areas of policing and in this case the firearms unit 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 that are specifically dedicated to firearms unit 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 that are intent on committing crimes and avoid detection.

Factors in favour of disclosure

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

To disclose details of specially trained police officers that are specifically dedicated to firearms 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.

Whilst not questioning the motives of the applicant, providing any further information relating to specific department numbers within Greater Manchester Police would reveal our operational capability, which would be of intelligence value to criminals.

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 pieces of information.

Due to low results, questions 5 and 6 are also exempt from disclosure under **Section 40(2) Personal Information** – this information constitutes personal data of an identifiable living individual, and to disclose this information would breach the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Personal data is defined by Section 1 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and means data that relates to an individual who can be identified directly or indirectly from that data.

Section 40 is an absolute exemption with no requirement to complete a public interest test.

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

Please note, questions 5 and 6 are categorised as Psychological Disorder.

Q1. See exemption above

Q2. See exemption above

Q3. 0

Q4. 0

Q5. See exemption above

Q6. See exemption above

Q7. We have several mechanisms in place to support our officers and staff. This includes (See table below).

Q8. The support is described above at question 7 is available to all of the workforce.

Firearms officers also complete a fitness for role assessment annually – which presents an opportunity to discuss their mental health and subsequently offer support where required.

Line management and HR support
Stress Risk Assessments to support our workforce
Employee Assistance Programme- which includes counselling and specialist Trauma support including EMDR therapy
An Occupational Health and Wellbeing Service (OHWS) for specialist support services including mental health therapies, wellbeing activities and signposting to external services
Mental Health Nurses as part of the OHWS
Welfare Officers
We have a number of Peer support groups and Staff Support Networks

REACTMH initiative (first line leader training within MH support).
Trauma Resilience Programme
Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) initiative
Force Chaplains
Bereavement volunteers
Employee Assistance Programme- which includes counselling and specialist Trauma support including EMDR therapy
An Occupational Health and Wellbeing Service (OHWS) for specialist support services including mental health therapies, wellbeing activities and signposting to external services