

Date: 04/03/2025
Our ref: 01/FOI/25/014315/E

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/25/014315/E

I write in connection with your request for information dated 27/02/2025, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

Please could you provide me with the following information:

How many police officers and police staff were assigned to your Rural Crime Team, in FTE, as of the following dates

- a. 31st December 2024***
- b. 31st December 2019***

Please could you confirm receipt of this request and let me know if you require any further clarification.

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.

The information has been exempted from disclosure by virtue of the following exemption:

• Section 31(1)(a)(b) - Law Enforcement

Sections 31 is a prejudice-based and qualified exemption. There is a requirement to articulate the harm in disclosing such information as well as carrying out a public interest test.

Evidence of Harm

Disclosure of the number of officers and staff on specific operation area could be of intelligence value to a person or persons with criminal or malicious intent. The disclosure could provide and enable targeted malicious actions, be that some form of attack on the operational team or avoiding that team for example where strengths and weakness may be perceived (whether incorrectly or not).

Public Interest Test**Section 31 - Factors favouring disclosure**

To disclose this information would adhere to the basic principle of being open and transparent, it would also lead to a better public awareness of the workings of the police force.

Section 31 - Factors favouring non-disclosure

Providing the level of officers and staff on specific operation area would reveal the operational and tactical capabilities of Greater Manchester Police. If specific numbers were given for a specialised team, this would allow the geographic mapping of resources. This would compromise law enforcement tactics and hinder the prevention and detection of crime and the successful prosecution of offenders.

Disclosure would provide those individuals or groups within the criminal fraternity who wish to attack the police with a significant operational advantage and the information could also be used to target locations perceived as less well-resourced or to develop tactics to divert resources away from locations that they wish to target. This would clearly jeopardise the ability of Greater Manchester Police to respond appropriately to criminal activity and thereby protect the public.

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 must 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 openness. However, this needs to be weighed against the strongest reason for non-disclosure which is the fact that individuals may be placed at risk and the affect it may have on the prevention and detection of crime and protecting the people/communities we serve.

Having considered all the factors for and against disclosure, the reason against disclosure outweighs the reason for disclosure and so the decision at this time to maintain the above exemption and withhold the information from disclosure.