

Date: 23/07/2025

Our ref: 01/FOI/25/015012/W

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/25/015012/W

I write in connection with your request for information dated 27/06/2025, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

I am submitting a Freedom of Information request under the FOIA 2000. I am seeking information regarding the identification methods used for the victims of the Manchester Arena bombing on 22 May 2017.

Specifically, I would like to request:

- 1. A summary of the identification methods used for each of the 22 victims.***
 - 2. For each case, whether the individual was identified by visual means, personal belongings, or through forensic methods (e.g. DNA, fingerprints, dental records).***
 - 3. If individual-level information cannot be disclosed, I would appreciate an anonymised or aggregated breakdown of how many victims were identified by each method.***
- This request is part of my dissertation research for a Master's degree in Forensic Medical Science, and the information is being sought for academic purposes only.***

I understand that some information may be withheld under exemptions relating to personal data or distress to families. However, I am requesting this information for research purposes and would greatly appreciate any redacted or summarised version that can be lawfully shared. Please provide the information in electronic format via email. If you need any clarification, I am happy to help.

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.

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 that applies to this request is:

Section 38(1)(a)(b) Health and Safety

Section 38 is a prejudice based qualified exemption; there is a requirement to articulate the harm that would be caused in disclosing such information as well as carrying out a public interest test, which can be seen below.

Harm

This 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. GMP would have no control as to who goes on to see it as a result.

The pain and suffering caused to the victims' is unquestionably as profound now as it was when the attack took place and to provide any footage would undoubtedly have an impact on the health and safety of the victims' and their family members.

Disclosing such information could cause further distress and hurt to grieving families, many of who would no doubt still be greatly traumatised by the attack. Such information being disclosed could resurface these traumatic experiences and cause the victims' 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

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 data including video and audio footage.

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

Factors Favouring Non-Disclosure

Although a lot of information may already be in the public domain, due to the nature of the attack and a disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act is a 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 all the victims', friends and family of all involved and grieving families.

Balance 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 requested would be openness. This needs to be weighed out against the strongest reason for non-disclosure which is concerns for the health and safety, both mental and physical of all the victims and victims family members.

Having considered all the factors for and against disclosure it is my belief that in this case, 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.

Relevant Link

Please see the following link [Manchester Arena Inquiry reports - GOV.UK](#)

Other sources of information are available via college of policing.

[https://library.college.police.uk/docs/NPCC/Explaining Disaster Victim Identification in Major Incidents.pdf](https://library.college.police.uk/docs/NPCC/Explaining_Disaster_Victim_Identification_in_Major_Incidents.pdf)