

Date: 18/06/2025

Our ref: 01/FOI/25/014842/W

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/25/014842/W

I write in connection with your request for information dated 28/05/2025, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

***** REFINED REQUEST 01/FOI/25/014729/W *****

Thank you for your response, that is very helpful. I apologise that this request was so much more labour-intensive than I thought it would be!

I wondered if instead, as a more manageable request: would you be able to provide me with a sample of anonymised, completed MG7 forms that recommend a remand in prison custody?

For example, the first completed form (which ticks the 'in custody' box) from each month of April 2024-April 2025, for a total of 13 MG7 forms, ideally with a note indicating all the relevant offences the defendant is charged with.

I am interested in the process of how defendants end up remanded into custody, so I would only want to see the relevant reasons and justifications. I have attached a copy of the MG7 indicating which areas I would expect to be redacted to give you an idea of what I mean.

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 exemption applies.

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 exemption which applies to this request is:

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

To provide a copy of an MG7 form as requested that is used by GMP would reveal policing tactics. The design of the form reflects how GMP evaluate and present remand justifications, including risk assessments, legal thresholds, and procedural timing. Public knowledge of this could allow offenders or legal advisers to anticipate and exploit gaps and weaknesses in enforcement or judicial reasoning.

Disclosing the requested form, even as a blank template may illustrate how specific aggravating factors or procedural risks such as a flight risk, witness interference is framed. This could be used to pre-empt or counter standard police submissions.

While a blank template may seem harmless in isolation, it contributes to a broader mosaic of sensitive information. When combined with other disclosures, it could facilitate reverse engineering of police tactics and custody decision criteria.

The safety of the public is of a paramount importance to Greater Manchester Police and to release the details of official forms like MG7's would compromise the safety of the public that Greater Manchester Police serve to protect.

Factors Favouring Disclosure

To disclose a copy of the MG7 form would provide the public with a slightly more in-depth knowledge into how Greater Manchester Police operates. This would encourage discussions about the criminal system, including whether remand decisions are fair and proportionate

Factors Favouring Non-Disclosure

Conversely to the factors in favour of disclosure, to release this information into the public domain would reveal the policing tactics of Greater Manchester Police. It would lead to individuals being more knowledgeable of information, which is being recorded, which would lead to them taking actions to evade law enforcement and risks the manipulation of criminal procedures.

Familiarity with the procedural tools and how risks are presented could impact the impartiality of bail hearings, especially if widely used by defence counsel or online sources to challenge remand decisions procedurally rather than substantively

The risk of danger to the public would be increased by revealing such policing tactics into the public domain. The safety of the public we protect is of paramount importance to Greater Manchester Police and we would not wish to jeopardise that safety by releasing exempt information into the public domain.

Balancing Test

The arguments for and against disclosure of information need to weigh against each other. In this case the greatest argument for disclosure is the fact that the populous would be provided with information regarding how the force police operate.

However, given that the disclosure would increase the risk of prejudice to law enforcement functions, particularly regarding how suspects may attempt to undermine remand decisions or avoid apprehension. The balance of disclosure, at this time, weighs on non-disclosure for the information requested.

This letter acts as a refusal notice for this request.