

Date: 09/06/2026
Our ref: 01/FOI/26/016866/H

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/26/016866/H

I write in connection with your request for information dated 11/05/2026, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

- How many cases have involved 3D printers in each of the last 4 years?*
- How many of these led to a conviction?*
- How many instances of 3D printers being used to create illegal weapons, or parts for illegal weapons, have been investigated in each of the last 4 years?*
- How many of these led to a conviction?*

Result of Searches

Greater Manchester Police neither confirms nor denies that it holds information relevant to this request by virtue of the following exemptions:

**Section 23(5) - Information supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters,
Section 24(2) National Security
Section 31(3) – Law Enforcement.**

Harm

Confirmation or denial that information is held would identify local level policing activity relating to the investigation, detection, or seizure of 3D printed weapons. This would risk revealing the level of police awareness, intelligence holdings, and operational focus in relation to such weapons within the force area.

When this request is made to multiple police forces, there is a further and more significant risk. Confirmation or denial by individual forces would allow responses to be compared, enabling a picture to be built of where national and local investigations and operations are taking place, and potentially where they are not. This mapping or “mosaic” effect would undermine the effective delivery of law

enforcement by revealing intelligence gaps, operational priorities, or areas of reduced activity in relation to 3D printed firearms.

Such disclosure would compromise the integrity of policing operations by exposing sensitive intelligence relating to the force's response to emerging weapons threats. This could adversely affect ongoing or future investigations, some of which may be covert, and would reduce the effectiveness of law enforcement activity.

Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is considered a disclosure to the world at large. Whilst the motives of the applicant are not questioned, any information released would be equally accessible to criminals, including serious and organised crime groups and individuals involved in terrorist activity. It is widely recognised that such groups monitor FOI disclosures to identify policing capabilities, gaps, and vulnerabilities that may be exploited to further criminal activity.

The threat from terrorism cannot be ignored. The UK continues to face a sustained threat from violent extremism, and any information that identifies the focus, scale, or effectiveness of policing activity relating to weapons offences has the potential to place public safety at risk and undermine national security.

Any information that could be used to infer the level of policing activity, intelligence capability, or operational focus in relation to 3D printed firearms would therefore prejudice both local and national law enforcement efforts.

Section 24(2) – National Security

Factors favouring compliance with section 1(1)(a) - There is a public interest in transparency and accountability in relation to policing and national security matters. Disclosure could contribute to public understanding of how threats are managed and how policing resources are deployed to address emerging risks involving weapons.

Factors against compliance with section 1(1)(a) - There is a very strong public interest in safeguarding national security and protecting the public from harm. Confirming or denying whether information is held would risk undermining counter-terrorism and serious crime operations by revealing sensitive intelligence, operational focus, or investigative capability. Any such disclosure could be exploited by those seeking to cause harm, increasing the risk to the public and to police officers.

Section 31(3) – Law Enforcement

Factors favouring compliance with section 1(1)(a) - There is a general public interest in openness and in increasing awareness of criminal threats involving weapons. Disclosure could, in theory, contribute to public vigilance and the reporting of suspicious activity.

Factors against compliance with section 1(1)(a) - Confirming or denying whether information is held would prejudice the prevention and detection of crime by revealing law-enforcement tactics, intelligence focus, or operational priorities. Even limited disclosures can contribute to a cumulative mosaic effect, whereby multiple pieces of information are assembled to reveal sensitive operational detail. This would undermine the effectiveness of policing and increase the risk of harm to the public.

Balancing Test

While there is a public interest in transparency, this is outweighed by the strong public interest in protecting national security, preserving the integrity of law-enforcement operations, and safeguarding the public. Confirming or denying whether information is held by GMP would risk revealing sensitive intelligence relating to the policing of weapons offences, including the scale, focus, or effectiveness of operations involving 3D-printed firearms.

The cumulative risk created by confirmation or denial, particularly when responses from multiple forces are compared, is significant. Any such disclosure would contribute to an intelligence picture that could be exploited by criminals or terrorists.

On balance, the public interest favours maintaining neither confirm nor deny position. No inference can be drawn from this response as to whether information is held or not held.