



Date: 12/05/2026
Our ref: 01/FOI/26/016577/B

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/26/016577/B

I write in connection with your request for information dated 13/03/2026, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

Many thanks for your response to our request for information.

We take your point about the time implications involved in providing information as per part 1 of our original request. You suggest that we could narrow our request to a much reduced timescale, but after discussion at this end, we are wondering if you could action a request for data relating to offence codes instead, as worded below:

1. We would be grateful if you could conduct searches for the number of offences recorded, under Home Office Code 92/21 – “Production or being concerned in production of a controlled drug – cannabis”, for each calendar year from 2015 – 2025.

If so, that would be very useful, if it could be done avoiding the cost exemption under the Act. We would be grateful if you could proceed accordingly, and action that revised request. (We do not need outcomes or other data concerning these offences.)

Concerning part 2 of our initial request:

2. Policies, procedures, or guidance –

Please confirm whether your force holds any written policies, procedures, standard operating procedures, or operational guidance relating to how officers should deal with sites that are used, or suspected to be used, for cannabis cultivation.

Does the failure of our initial request (which led to the failure of part 2 as well, as per the Act), mean that it cannot now be re-considered as well as the revised part 1 (above)?

If so, that would be great, but if not, just let us know.

Again, many thanks for your help with this one – we are keenly aware of the time that responding to these things takes!

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 supply you with all of the information held as exemptions apply.

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 information you have requested in question 2 is 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.

S31(1) - Evidence of Harm

A Freedom of Information Act request is not a private transaction. Both the request itself and any information disclosed, are considered suitable for open publication. This is because under the Act, any information disclosed is released into the wider public domain, effectively to the world, not just to an individual.

Whilst not questioning the motives of the applicant, providing any further information relating to procedures for the investigation of crime scenes and the gathering of evidence would reveal sensitive operational information, which would be of intelligence value to criminals.

Disclosure of investigative strategies and evidence collection methods, including those used to investigate crimes linked to the cultivation of cannabis will mean that those members of the public who are committing crimes and pose a risk to the public, would be able to formulate ways to evade detection and destroy evidence in an attempt to hinder the investigative process. If disclosed the tactics used by GMP will become less effective and will mean that the police are not able to detect and prevent crime, apprehend, or prosecute offenders or to administer justice for the wider community.

There is always a duty of care to the general public and the Police Service has a clear responsibility to ensure the prevention or detection of crime, and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders is always delivered. There are several tactics available to the Police Service to ensure the effective delivery of operational law enforcement. In the case of sites used for cannabis cultivation, specialist policing activity is required to undertake fair investigations and recover evidence where it may be necessary to progress a range of reasonable lines of enquiry.

As such, the disclosure of any further information which would hinder the forces law enforcement functions cannot be in the public interest.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure for S31 - Where public funds are being spent, there is a public interest in accountability and justifying the use of public money. Disclosure of the requested information would enable the public to assess whether the force has appropriately taken steps to help reduce and detect crime by such means as investigating crimes relating to the cultivation of cannabis. Release would enhance public debate as to whether the force is appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat posed by criminals.

Factors against disclosure for S31 - Disclosure that reveals operational information for specific types of crime would compromise law enforcement tactics. Criminals could use the information to change their offending behaviour knowing that their activities would be less likely to be detected. It may be used by criminals who are intent on pursuing their criminal activity, to identify and exploit the limitations of GMP. Therefore, to mitigate any risks, disclosure of this information needs to be protected, to ensure that those with intent to do so cannot manipulate it or undermine its purpose in any way.

Any disclosure of information which would compromise law enforcement tactics and thus lead to more crime being committed by reducing the opportunity for the prevention and detection of crime, would therefore increase the risk to public safety, which is not in the public interest.

Balancing Test

Law enforcement is of paramount importance and the Police service will not disclose information if to do so would undermine its purpose and place the safety of individuals at risk. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of using public money in policing appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat posed by criminals, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the integrity of police investigations and operations in this area.

As much as there is public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced in matters of law enforcement, this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. Any disclosure which hinders our capability and assists criminals cannot be in the public interest.

It is for these reasons that I have determined that the balance test favours non-disclosure of the requested information.

The information you have requested in question 1 is not exempt, and is provided below, subject to the following **CAVEATS**:

In July 2019, GMP implemented one of the largest IT infrastructure changes in UK policing. The systems are in continual development and the data provided for this request is what the systems currently hold.

Management of Police Information regulations state that non-essential records should be removed from police systems six financial years after the year in which they were originally created. This means that data that is more than six financial years old may be incomplete and should not be compared to more recent data.

We were unable to locate any recordable offences using the information you provided in your email dated 20/04/2026. It could be the case that this is an outdated offence code, or it could be a Ministry of Justice code, rather than a Home Office code. We have proceeded with Home

Office offence code 092/21. This data contains crimes with a created date between 01/01/2015 and 31/12/2025, where the HO offence is 092/21 'production of a cannabis plant', excluding cancelled crimes and crimes classified as non-counting fraud. Further information about cancelled crimes can be obtained from the Home Office Counting Rules. Details regarding fraud crime can be obtained by contacting the NFIB.

Some offences may only be available for part of this time period i.e. they may have started or stopped being used during this period.

Crime Created on Date : Calendar Year Number	Volume of Crimes
2015	605
2016	479
2017	463
2018	469
2019	472
2020	543
2021	588
2022	561
2023	492
2024	463
2025	369