



Date: 27/04/2026
Our ref: 01/FOI/26/016638/X

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/26/016638/X

I write in connection with your request for information dated 30/03/2026, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

I write to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request recorded information held by your organisation.

Please provide the following information in relation to custody operations on 7 March 2026:

1. *The total number of operational custody cells available at:*
 - *Longsight Custody Suite*
 - *Central Park Custody Suite*
2. *The number of those cells that were occupied at the closest recorded time to my arrest on that date. If data is not recorded at exact times, please provide the nearest available custody occupancy records (e.g. hourly snapshots, shift records, or custody management system logs).*
3. *Any records, logs, or reports indicating:*
 - *Whether either custody suite was at or near full capacity at any point during that date*
 - *Any instances of detainees being diverted, transferred, or delayed due to capacity limitations*
4. *Copies of any relevant policies, guidance, or operational procedures in force at the time regarding:*
 - *Maximum cell capacity*
 - *Handling of detainees when custody suites reach capacity*

For the avoidance of doubt, this request is for statistical and operational information only and does not seek personal data relating to any identifiable individual.

If any part of this request is considered exempt, please provide the remaining information and clearly specify the exemption(s) relied upon, along with your reasoning in accordance with the Act.

If my request exceeds the appropriate cost limit, please advise how it may be refined to fall within the limit.

Please provide the requested information in electronic format.

Result of Searches

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to locate information relevant to your request. I can confirm that the information you have requested is held by GMP. However, I am not obliged to supply you with all the information 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. Where redactions occur in the attached document that is because the redacted information is exempt under **Section 31(1)(a)(b) – Law Enforcement** and **Section 40(2) – Personal Information**.

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 specific departments and functions within Greater Manchester Police would reveal our operational capability, which would be of intelligence value to criminals.

Disclosure of tactics at the police's disposal, including methods of dealing with a low number of available custody cells 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 circumvent or overwhelm GMP. 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 this case, specialist policing activity is required to undertake fair investigations 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 ensuring investigations are completed as soon as possible. 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 our operational capabilities would compromise law enforcement tactics. Criminals could use the information to target areas of perceived weakness assuming that their activities are 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 these resources.

To release information relating to operational capacity and methods of reducing cell occupancy would have a detrimental effect on our policing capabilities. 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.

Section 40(2) represents information that identifies a living individual, to disclose this information would breach the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018. Personal data is defined by Section 1 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and means data that relates to an individual who can be identified directly or indirectly from that data.

Section 40 is an absolute exemption and there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test for such data.

1. Longsight: 0 – The custody suite at Longsight Police Station is currently closed for building work.

Central Park: 27 - 2 cells were out of action due to faults reported – they were rectified on 07/03/26, time unknown, which took capacity to 29

2. A snapshot of cell capacity is captured at 16:00 shows 16 detainees in custody at 19:00 hours 18 detainees in custody, this is the only data collected between the times requested.
3. Central Park was close to capacity 28 cells in use at the 11:00 snapshot of cell capacity across sites.
4. From the data held 5 detainees that would have been sent to Central Park in the first instance were diverted to other custody suites. It is important to note that diversions are not always the result of capacity issues for example medical emergencies.
5. Please see the attached, redacted document.

GMP CJ & Custody Branch Cell Capacity Document.

VERSION NO	DATE	SUMMARY OF CHANGES	AUTHOR(S)
1.0	16th May 2024	New document and first issue	
1.1	22 nd March 2026	Document reviewed and revised no changes to main content, overarching objective added and document re formatted. Appendix B reviewed and updated to include new Longsight custody suite	

Introduction

Effective custody management is essential to maintaining the safety, welfare, and operational efficiency of the Criminal Justice (CJ) system. As demand for detention space fluctuates, the ability to monitor and manage cell capacity becomes critical to ensuring that all detainees are held safely, legally, and in accordance with statutory requirements. This document sets out the Custody Management Plan to be implemented when cell availability falls below 30 cells.

Establish approximate capacity limit (ACL): Upon starting cover, Custody Bronze should establish an approximate capacity limit. This limit, influenced by factors such as staffing levels, estate issues, operations, and high-risk detainees, aids in forward planning and the provision of tactical advice.

Monitor and Local Action Phase (Consider when detainee numbers are within 30-25 of ACL):

1. Custody bronze Initiate manual 30-minute detainee counts (not to be delegated to CCU).
2. Direct all C&C Sgts and available custody Inspectors to expedite investigations towards appropriate disposals. Consider Bail for cases with no T/H/R and review Remands.
3. Instruct C&C Sgts and custody Inspectors to collaborate with local DITS and districts bronzes to expedite investigations and Bail detainees where a remand is not sought.
4. Resolve any estate issues if possible.

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5. After review of local collaboration to free space, Custody Bronze should establish a projected demand profile considering all additional demand factors such as court runs, Op Early Dawn, Op Safeguard etc and identified opportunities to Bail or release detainees. Use the 30-minute counts to evaluate success and determine if moving to phase 2 or 3 is necessary.

Stage 2 (Consider within 10-15 of ACL):

1. Custody Bronze Notify Custody Silver and agree on a plan, if out of hours Custody Bronze to move to point 2.
2. Use force duty contacts to identify covering Supt's and FCIM and notify (after 0300hrs notify just FDO and FCIM). A lead should be nominated, and Custody Bronze will function as tactical advisor to the lead. Ensure a joined-up plan to review current live demand across all custody suites. Consider with Supt approval creating an incident log ([see appendix A for wording](#)).
3. Nominated lead consider setting a silver meeting between DIT/Custody/Districts. ([See appendix C for Silver agenda template](#))
4. Custody Bronze should provide a current demand snapshot ([see appendix B for snapshot grid template](#)) that will aid reviewing the success of any plan to create cell space.
5. Consider creating an ATHOC with Supt authority via FCIM ([see appendix A for wording](#)).
6. Custody Bronze should remind all C&C Sgts to Bail detainees where safe and ensure C&C are updating whiteboards and consulting with CCU as spaces become available.
7. Custody Bronze should use the Snapshot grid and proposed plan to monitor via the 30 min checks and project demand to inform if we need to move to phase 3 or drop to monitor phase.

Stage 3 (Consider within 5 cells of ACL):

1. A full plan should now be underway. Custody Bronze should provide projected demand using the snapshot and monitoring to inform decision making for the nominated lead.
2. Consider using holding cells, corridors, and L4 observations for additional temporary space.
3. Call a final review between nominated lead, Custody Bronze, covering Silvers, and FCIM to review the plan to free cell space. All districts must provide a summary of efforts to free cell space. ([See appendix C for Silver agenda template](#))
4. If the plan cannot reasonably and safely create cell space, Custody should provide an updated snapshot to nominated lead to decide on the following steps.
5. Consider escalating to Gold and creating a GBS structure to review current situation.
6.

- 7. Consider declaring a critical incident.
- 8. Seek Gold approval to consider mutual aid.

Appendix A:

Custody Cell Capacity Protocol Appendix A.

- **Suggested wording for incident log (Requires Supt authority):** **INFO* Custody Cells near to capacity - FOC from Custody Silver - detainees to be dealt with expeditiously to assist custody capacity Due to high numbers of detainees in custody can all district Silvers as a matter of urgency review the prisoners they have in custody and ensure they are dealt with expeditiously and consider bail in cases where a remand is not sought. Staff to expedite all prisoners in custody to help increase capacity. There may be a wait for staff transporting detainees.*
- **Suggested wording for ATHOC (Requires Supt authority):** *Custody Cell Space is near capacity. District and branch SLTs are requested to expedite detainee processing. Arrestees may not be allocated to their nearest custody suite due to high demand. Plans are in progress to manage current cell capacity. Your cooperation is appreciated.*

Appendix B:

See separate excel spreadsheet

Appendix C:

1. Opening Update (Chair)
 - Overview of current force-wide cell capacity
 - Imminent risk of reaching full capacity
2. District Updates (All Representatives)
Each district representative to provide:
 - Number and type of prisoners currently in custody
 - Actions being taken to expedite processing and free space
3. Short Bail & Immediate Release (All Representatives)
Each district representative to confirm:
 - Whether short bail has been considered or utilised

- Threat, harm, and risk factors taken into account

4. Next Steps

- Actions required from each district
- Escalation routes and key points of contact

Official