



Freedom of Information Request Reference N°: FOI 000482-18

I write in connection with your request for information received by Suffolk Constabulary on the 1 February 2018 in which you sought access to the following information:

1. *“How many incidents involving a gun have the officers in your force responded to in the last three years, by calendar year please.*
2. *How many guns have been seized by your police year on year for the past three years? By calendar year please.”*

Response to your Request

The response provided below is correct as of 22 February 2018

Suffolk Constabulary has considered your request for information and the response is below.

1. Information concerning the number of firearm offences recorded by the Constabulary is published on the Home Office website.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires that Suffolk Constabulary, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) is to provide you the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) States that fact
- (b) Specifies the exemption(s) in question and
- (c) States (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption(s) applies.

The information is exempt from disclosure by virtue of the following exemption(s);

- Section 21(1) - Information reasonably accessible by other means**
Section 22(1) - Information intended for future publication

Information concerning firearm offences are published on the ONS website and are therefore reasonably accessible by other means as per Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The following link will take you to the appropriate page:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/appendixtablesfocusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences>



Section 22 is a qualified, class-based exemption and I am therefore required to produce a Public Interest Test.

Public Interest Test

(When applying a qualified exemption a public authority is required to consider whether 'in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information')

Considerations favouring disclosure

When information disclosed relates directly to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Force or its Officers. In this instance to release such statistics would demonstrate greater awareness of Constabulary crime and detection rates.

Where disclosure can assist individuals by raising awareness of such issues, which may be of relevance to them. In this instance by providing the data requested, we could provide up to date statistics useful for Public debate and the decisions of individuals.

In certain cases, providing this information could assist in research that could benefit the community as a whole, again enabling accurate public awareness and debate.

Considerations favouring non-disclosure

To supply statistical data, which has not yet been published, would require a large amount of time to collate the information required, this in turn would detract an individual or individuals from their daily tasks, hindering the efficiency in their posts.

All Forces collate such data to be included in annual or quarterly national publications and is done so in order to facilitate greater awareness and transparency of the Constabularies. The range of information contained within the report, and the resources required to bring the information together is immense. Finalisation of this report is only made possible by the diversion of resources in to an annual effort.

The FOIA legally allows members of the Public to request any information held by the Public Authority. In order to supply this information, resources are allocated to locate and retrieve it. The Section 21 and 22 exemptions were specifically laid down by parliament to benefit those authorities that proactively publish information. To constantly produce new and up to date elements of the currently published information, in order to satisfy an additional need outside of the publication schedule, will render these exemptions less effective and remove the benefits of the proactive publication.

Balancing Test

It is noted that Public Awareness and Debate are key to the FOIA, making Authorities more accountable and providing up to date relevant statistical information, improving knowledge and public understanding of the Force.

However, the information is routinely published enabling ratified data to be published on a national scale. It would not therefore, be proactive of this Constabulary to produce information prior to the publication of the information.

It is for the above reasons that Section 22 is engaged.

2. The total number of firearms recorded within Constabulary property records is provided below. The number for 2017 includes replica weapons, BB guns and Air weapons, all of which are not included within the 2015 and 2016 calendar year total.

The figure is based on the number of firearms recorded by the Constabulary, which will include those recorded for evidential purposes, found or surrendered.

Year	No. of Firearms
2015	841
2016	659
2017	1263

Police forces in the United Kingdom are routinely required to provide crime statistics to government bodies and the recording criteria is set nationally. However, the systems used for recording these figures are not generic, nor are the procedures used locally in capturing the crime data. It should be noted that for these reasons this force's response to your questions should not be used for comparison purposes with any other response you may receive.

A full copy of the Freedom of Information Act (2000) can be viewed on the 'Office of Public Sector Information' web-site;
<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/>

Suffolk Constabulary is not responsible for the content, or the reliability, of the website referenced. The Constabulary cannot guarantee that this link will work all of the time, and we have no control over the availability of the linked pages.



Your Right to Request a Review of Decisions Made Under the Terms of the
Freedom of Information Act (2000).

If you are unhappy with how your request has been handled, or if you think the decision is incorrect, you have the right to ask Suffolk Constabulary to review their decision.

Ask Suffolk Constabulary to look at the decision again.

If you are dissatisfied with the decision made by Suffolk Constabulary under the Freedom of Information Act (2000), regarding access to information, you must notify Suffolk Constabulary that you are requesting a review within 20 days of the date of its response to your Freedom of Information request. Requests for a review should be made in writing and addressed to:

*Freedom of Information Decision Maker
Information Management Department
Suffolk Constabulary
Police Headquarters
Martlesham Heath
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP5 3QS
OR
Email: information@suffolk.pnn.police.uk*

In all possible circumstances Suffolk Constabulary will aim to respond to your request for us to look at our decision again within 20 working days of receipt of your request for an internal review.

The Information Commissioner.

After lodging a request for a review with Suffolk Constabulary, if you are still dissatisfied with the decision, you can apply to the Information Commissioner for a decision on whether the request for information has been dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

For information on how to make application to the Information Commissioner please visit their website at www.ico.org.uk or contact them at the address shown below:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Telephone: 01625 545 700