



Freedom of Information Request Reference N^o: FOI 000589-19

I write in connection with your request for information received by Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies on 11 February 2019 which you sought access to the following information:

1. *"The number of response officers working the night shift on each day of the first full week in February 2019 - i.e. from Monday 4th to Sunday 10th*
2. *If possible/applicable I would like this information broken down geographically - e.g. by Local Authority/CSP or similar.*
3. *The hours covered by these shifts."*

Response to your Request

The response provided below is correct as of 15 February 2019

Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies have considered your request for information and the response is below.

Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies standard response night shift patterns are as follows:

Day	Norfolk	Suffolk
Monday	22:00-07:00	23:00-07:00
Tuesday	22:00-07:00	23:00-07:00
Wednesday	22:00-07:00	23:00-07:00
Thursday	22:00-07:00	23:00-07:00
Friday	21:00-07:00	23:00-07:00
Friday	18:00-05:00	
Saturday	21:00-07:00	23:00-07:00
Saturday	18:00-05:00	
Sunday	21:00-07:00	23:00-07:00

The total number of officers assigned to the night shift, per day has not been supplied as a result of exemptions within the Act. This exemption is also applicable for the information further broken down by policing areas.

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

Section 31(a)(b)(c) – Law Enforcement

Section 31 is a qualified and prejudice based exemption and I am therefore obliged to articulate the harm in this information being disclosed and assess the public interest in disclosure.

Harm in disclosure

Information concerning the strengths and capability of the Constabularies would not be disclosed if to do so would prejudice policing across the county and impact negatively on resources.

Disclosure of information under the Freedom of Information Act is considered to be a release of information to the world, because once information is released, it will be published on the disclosure log pages of the Constabularies website. The Constabularies have no control over who has access to that information. Whilst not questioning an applicant's motives for requesting this information, it could be of interest to persons who are involved in criminal activity.

It is considered that provision of officer numbers will allow people to draw conclusions as to the perceived level of police officers required at any given time. This in turn could identify to the criminal fraternity, occasions where the Constabulary will be at its most vulnerable, based on uniformed officer deployment figures alone, allowing for criminals to calculate when it is potentially the best time to commit crime in order to avoid detection.

This would undermine the law enforcement capabilities of the Constabulary and therefore it is confirmed that Section 31 is engaged.

Factors favouring disclosure

Police officer numbers do differ depending on shift, time and operational demand at the time.

Information that relates directly to the operational effectiveness and efficiencies of the Constabularies are a positive factor favouring disclosure. The public have a right to know that they are being protected in an appropriate and diligent manner.

Public knowledge of the Constabularies will ensure informed public debate, retaining the Constabulary's open and honest approach.

Factors favouring non-disclosure

Disclosure of information that can affect the current and future law enforcement capabilities of the Constabularies will always favour non-disclosure. On this occasion, providing the number of the police officers on the front line at any one time will allow for comparisons to be made should additional data be requested. This in turn will allow for the determination as to the strength of front line police officers, invariably providing criminals with advanced knowledge of the Constabularies capabilities.

Although it can be argued that this is a historical figure and future working patterns will be subject to change depending on operational requirements at the time, provision of data at such a low level will allow individuals to determine projected perceived officer numbers based on analysis of datasets disclosed by the police service. For example, disclosure of this data may in turn encourage individuals to make requests for alternative days / times, allowing for historical mapping of police numbers on the front line and providing an estimation to the mean number of officers required to police the county at any one time. This will be subject to change depending on the operational requirement at the time; however it would provide a good basis for an approximate value to be determined.

Suffolk and Norfolk and both relatively small forces and provision of data that identifies the strength of front line uniformed police officers could lead to individuals identifying when the forces are at their most vulnerable. Historical data would therefore not be disclosed if to do so could allow for such conclusions to be drawn.

Although public knowledge of the Constabularies capabilities is a positive factor, this is not unlimited and there are aspects of policing that must remain confidential.

Balancing test

Public knowledge of how their funds are being spent and assurance that the Police service are doing all they can to ensure public safety is maintained, is always a positive factor in disclosure.

On balance however, disclosure of this nature is more likely to have the opposite affect causing the criminal fraternity to have prior knowledge of Police operational capabilities, compromising the prevention and detection of crime and administration of justice.

The Police service has a duty to ensure public safety is never compromised and disclosures under FOI should always ensure this is maintained.

It is the Constabularies decision that disclosure lies in non-disclosure and application of the exemption is maintained.

Should you have any further queries concerning this request, please contact Clair Pack, FOI Decision Maker, quoting the reference number shown above.

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/>

Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies are 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 the Norfolk and Suffolk Constabulary to review their decision.

Ask Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies to look at the decision again.

If you are dissatisfied with the decision made by Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies under the Freedom of Information Act (2000), regarding access to information, you must notify the Norfolk and 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 Norfolk and Suffolk Constabulary will aim to respond to your request for us to look at our decision again within 40 working days of receipt of your request for an internal review.

The Information Commissioner.

After lodging a request for a review with Norfolk and 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