



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

REQUEST NUMBER: FOI Request 004113-17

REQUEST DETAILS:

- 1) *Do you request references for all of your new applicants or just for certain posts? If only certain posts, please can you confirm the job roles in which you do not need references for?*
- 2) *If you need references for a new applicant, how many do you require, or how far back (in years) do you seek references for?*
- 3) *When a reference is received, do you verify its origin to ensure that it is real?*
- 4) *If yes to the above, how is verification undertaken?*
- 5) *Where verification is carried out, how long can this take? (an average per reference is sufficient. A min – max time is also sufficient)*
- 6) *If a fake reference is discovered prior to the applicant beginning a role, would the application be terminated?*
- 7) *What would happen if a reference was discovered to be fake after the person had started their job? Would this be a legal issue, or dealt with via your in-house procedures?*
- 8) *Have you received a fake reference in the last 2 years?*
- 9) *What is the name and email address of your Head/Director of Human Resources? (or equivalent Head of the department that deals with Workforce, Recruitment or People Services)"*

RESPONSE:

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

This response is correct as of 10 March 2017

In relation to your request for information and in accordance with Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), this response serves as a formal notification of refusal for your request. Suffolk Constabulary does not hold, for the purposes of FOIA, the information you require in a retrievable format.

It is estimated that to attempt to retrieve all of the information you require would take a considerable amount of retrieval time, which would exceed 18



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hours. This would exceed the appropriate limit for dealing with Freedom of Information requests, in terms of costs and therefore Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 applies.

The Constabulary is unable to determine the number of job applications that have been refused due to the reference being unsatisfactory. Specifically regarding police officers, the information for all applications are retained for 12 months and a spreadsheet maintained to contain the reasons why an individual was unsuccessful. In order to establish the number of those that were unsuccessful as a result of an unsatisfactory reference, would require a manual review of hundreds of records, well exceeding the time constraints of the Act.

Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 states that a Public Authority is not obliged to: "...comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit." The Freedom of Information (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations, defines the 'appropriate limit' for the Suffolk Constabulary as £450 and specifies that this sum equates to 18 hours work at a standard rate of £25 per hour.

In accordance with Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter serves as a refusal notice for this part of your request.

By requesting *all* information your request is too broad to be complied with within the £450 limit imposed on Freedom of Information requests.

Although excess cost removes the Force's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, as a gesture of goodwill, I have supplied information, relative to your request, retrieved or available before it was realised that the fees limit would be exceeded. I trust this is helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request.

Police Staff

- 1) Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies request references for all of its new recruits.

The policy for references states as follows:

References: *Where you have been employed within the last 5 years, the referees must be your two most recent employers. If you have not been previously employed (either not at all or not within the last 5 years due to a break in your career) please nominate two responsible individuals who know you well but who are not related to you or your partner i.e. voluntary work/work experience co-ordinator, teacher/tutor, character referee, etc. If you have only ever been employed by one employer/organisation please nominate a responsible individual as described above as your second referee. We will only take up references for the successful candidate, and*



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will not contact your current employer without your permission.

- 2) As per extract above.
- 3) The Constabularies do confirm the origin of the reference to confirm it is real.
- 4) The reference is required to be on company headed paper or email. The email, company, sender and header information is then verified with the information supplied by the applicant.

Please refer to the Force Police Document 'HR References Document' on the Constabulary website, with particular reference to section 6 – Requesting a reference.

https://www.suffolk.police.uk/sites/suffolk/files/references_policy_v2.pdf

- 5) The Constabulary does not hold data concerning a minimum or maximum time allocated to verify the application.
- 6) The Constabulary will check a reference is satisfactory, in line with the FPD linked to above.
- 7) As per the FPD
- 8) The Constabulary does not hold this data in a retrievable format.
- 9) The Constabularies Director of Human Resources is Lindsay Shankland
Lindsay.SHANKLAND@suffolk.pnn.police.uk

Police Officers

Police officers are required to provide reference to cover the last 10 years' worth of employment or nominated person.

Police officer recruitment is a national programme in line with the College of Policing requirements, which can be accessed via the following link:

<http://recruit.college.police.uk/Officer/Pages/default.aspx>