

**Freedom of Information Request Reference N°: FOI 006485-17**

I write in connection with your request for information received by Suffolk Constabulary on the 18 September 2017 in which you sought access to the following information:

1. *“How many officers were allocated as members of safer neighbourhood policing teams as of (i) 1.4.16 and (ii) 1.4.17?”*
2. *How many PCSOs were allocated as members of safer neighbourhood policing teams as of (i) 1.4.16 and (ii) 1.4.17?*
3. *How many, if any, patrol bases did you have for your safer neighbour policing teams as of (i) 1.4.16 and (ii) 1.4.17?*
4. *How many officers were allocated as a Prevent Strategy officer as of (i) 1.4.16 and (ii) 1.4.17?”*

**Response to your Request**

The response provided below is correct as of 18 September 2017

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

Information has been gathered from our Human Resources department, which records information by month ends. The information provided is therefore correct as of 31 March.

1. The total number of officers allocated as members of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams was as follows:  
  
31.03.2016 – 107  
31.03.2017 – 71
2. The total number of PCSOs allocated as members of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams was as follows:  
  
31.03.2016 – 114  
31.03.2017 – 107
3. The total number of Safer Neighbourhood Teams patrol bases were as follows:  
  
31.03.2016 – SNT officers operated out of 29 stations  
31.03.2017 – SNT officers operated out of 18 stations
4. Information concerning the number of officers with a responsibility for PREVENT has not been disclosed as a result of exemptions within the Act.



Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) places two duties on public authorities. Unless exemptions apply, the first duty at s1(1)(a) is to confirm or deny whether the information specified in a request is held. The second duty at s1 (1)(b) is to disclose information that has been confirmed as being held.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires that Suffolk and Norfolk Constabulary, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) are 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 31(1) – Law enforcement**

**Section 24(1) – National Security**

The Section 24 and 31 exemptions are qualified and prejudice based exemptions and I am therefore obliged to consider the harm in disclosure, and conduct a Public Interest Test.

#### **Harm and Public Interest Considerations regarding the application of Section 24 and 31.**

The threat from terrorism cannot be ignored. It should be recognised that the international security landscape is increasingly complex and unpredictable. The UK faces a sustained threat from violent terrorists and extremists. Since 2006, the UK Government has published the threat level, which is based on current intelligence. The actual threat level to the UK from international terrorism (as of the date of compiling this advice) is “severe” (see below link) – this means that a terrorist attack is highly likely. Policing operations and contingency planning remain under constant review and a wide range of overt and covert tactics will continue to be used across the UK.

<https://www.mi5.gov.uk/home/the-threats/terrorism/threat-levels.html>

The disclosure of the requested information would undermine the individual regional/force CT units which would consequently be detrimental to our ability to be able to deal with the ongoing terrorist threat we face. By providing the number of officers specifically allocated to PREVENT, will identify resource allocation. This would be damaging as it would allow criminals/terrorists to gain a greater understanding of the police methodology and techniques, enabling them to take steps to counter them. Showing where resources are being allocated would allow those who may be undertaking criminal/terrorist activities to shift their activities to those areas that are perceived to have less resource.

Disclosure of information below a national figure would indicate levels of policing resources at individual levels and that information could allow individuals to exploit what they might consider to be ‘softer’, or what appear to be less active or resourced areas, by using comparisons across the Constabularies. This would allow criminals to understand regional and national CT policing activity by, for example, enabling terrorists to make judgments concerning their preferred travel



routes where they perceive there to be a greater vulnerability, lower staff levels and lesser probability of being apprehended.

#### Factors favouring disclosure of information for Section 31

There may be a public interest in the release of this information because it may reassure the public the Constabularies effectively manage CT issues.

Disclosure of the information would provide reassurance to the public that the Police have in place protocols to deal with these types of incidents and offences.

The Home Office regularly publishes national statistical data on Prevent.

#### Factors against disclosure of information for Section 31

Disclosure of the information would mean that law enforcement tactics would be compromised which would hinder the prevention and detection of crime. More crime would be committed because criminals would know which forces are focusing on PREVENT.

A fear of crime would be realised because if the terrorists identified more vulnerable areas, they would target and exploit these areas and the public would be in fear of more criminal/terrorist activity occurring.

There would be an impact on police resources because if the measure used by forces to detect terrorist activities is disclosed and some areas are deemed to be 'softer' at managing this threat, terrorist cells may move to these areas in order to continue their operations and target vulnerable individuals. There could be local implications with wrongful identification of children and families which in turn could lead to further offences being committed in the community.

#### Factors favouring disclosure of information for Section 24

The public are entitled to know how public funds are spent and by disclosing this information the public would be able to see where public money is being spent and know that forces are doing as much as they can to combat terrorism and radicalisation. Revealing this information would enable the public to have some reassurance that the Governments Counter Terrorism strategy is robust. This is an issue high on the public agenda and therefore the release of this information would contribute to an informed public debate.

#### Factors against disclosure of information for Section 24

Revealing information identifying officer allocation with respect PREVENT, may increase interest in cases, which may assist others intending to counter such work. Identification of those working locally to deliver the aims and objectives of PREVENT could enable those wishing to counter such work to engage in activity to disrupt and jeopardise the successful delivery of ongoing work. This could threaten the successful delivery of PREVENT and the government's counter terrorism strategy and lead to the public being at increased risk from terrorism. There is also a potential for such data to be used to increase community tensions in an area which would not be in the public interest



Any information shared between agencies (intelligence) has the potential to cover all aspects of criminal activity, be it threats to National Security, future planned robberies or intelligence relating to terrorist activity. Disclosure of the information would enable those intent on engaging in terrorist activities to determine on a National level which areas within the UK may be a vulnerable area to target.

### Balance test

The security of the country is of paramount importance and the Police service will not divulge information if to do so would place the safety of an individual at risk or undermine National Security. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations, information gathering and in this case providing assurance that the police service is appropriately and effectively safeguarding those who are vulnerable to radicalisation and targeting the cells behind the radicalisation, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding both national security and the integrity of police investigations and operations in the highly sensitive area of terrorism.

As much as there is public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced in matters of national security this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. Whilst there is a strong public interest in the transparency of policing programmes and in this case, providing assurance that the police service and other stakeholders are appropriately and effectively engaging with one another, combating the threat posed by individuals with the intent to use violence and other illegal means, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding both national security and the integrity of the stakeholders within the programme.

Suffolk Constabulary will not divulge information if it is likely that it will compromise the work of the Police Service or place members of the public at risk. Disclosure of the requested information would highlight which forces may have individuals who are more susceptible to radicalisation and how each force tackles this within their communities. This will adversely affect the Forces ability to detect this type of crime as it may alter the behaviours of those preying on vulnerable individuals. This in itself could put the individual's life at risk along with that of National Security. It is therefore our belief that the balance test lies in favour of not disclosing the information.

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](mailto: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](http://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