



**SUFFOLK  
CONSTABULARY**  
*Taking pride in keeping Suffolk safe*

## **Freedom of Information Request Reference N°: FOI 002182-19**

I write in connection with your request for information received by Suffolk Constabulary on the 12 June 2019 in which you sought access to the following information:

*“Please could you provide a copy of all your internal force guidance for officers including policies, procedures, checklists, toolkits on:*

- 1. Domestic abuse*
- 2. Harassment and stalking*
- 3. Victims’ Right to Review”*

### **Response to your Request**

The response provided below is correct as of 21 June 2019

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

The policy documents relating to the above requested topics are provided attached in a redacted format, as follows: -

- Domestic Abuse
- Stalking & Harassment

The information that has been redacted is identifiable from a series of blacked out areas, which have been removed 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 section 1(1)(a) is to confirm or deny whether the information specified in a request is held. The second duty at section 1(1)(b) is to disclose information that has been confirmed as being held.

Where exemptions are relied upon, section 17 of the FOIA requires that we 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 exemptions apply

The information is exempt from disclosure by virtue of the following exemption: -

### **Section 31(1)(a)(b) - Law Enforcement**

Section 31 is a qualified, prejudice-based exemption and therefore I am obliged to provide evidence of harm and carry out a public interest test.

#### Harm

The disclosure of information under the Freedom of Information Act is considered to be a release to the world. Once information has been released, the response will be published on the Disclosure Log pages of the Constabulary's website and therefore accessible to anyone who wishes to view it. Whilst not questioning an applicant's motive for requesting information, careful consideration has to be given to the disclosure of any details which may be advantageous to suspects and offenders.

Providing details of the way in which the Constabulary carries out enquiries and gathers evidence, relating to domestic crimes, would be useful information to those who commit such offences. This could result in offenders taking steps to destroy evidence in an attempt to avoid detection.

The Constabulary works in partnership with many other agencies in order to tackle crime. Although there is a call for openness and transparency, this needs to be balanced against the harm in disclosure of the requested information. Providing the requested details would undermine the partnership approach and could impact on any ongoing operations or investigations.

#### Public Interest Test

##### Factors favouring disclosure

The purpose of the Freedom of Information Act is to make public authorities more open and transparent. Any disclosure which improves public debate and results in more victims and witnesses coming forward with information is a positive factor.

Disclosure would show that the Constabulary takes all reports of crime seriously and are working in partnership to tackle domestic abuse offences and taking all steps to safeguard victims.

##### Factors against disclosure



The current and future law enforcement role of the Constabulary would be compromised by the release of the information. Disclosure of the information may provide useful intelligence to those involved in committing offences and would reduce the Constabularies operational effectiveness. This would result in the need for additional resources and public spending in this area of policing.

Releasing details under FOI which would hinder the prevention and detection of crime would result in a loss of public confidence. This may deter individuals from coming forward to report offences or to support investigations.

### Balance Test

The Constabularies will always release information under the Freedom of Information wherever possible and where it is appropriate to do so. Any disclosure which increases public awareness and could result in more information being provided to the police is a positive factor.

There is a significant public interest in the work that is being undertaken by the Constabulary in order to combat domestic crime. However, it would not be in the public interest to release any information which could assist offenders and increase the risk of harm to victims.

For these reasons, the balance is in favour of non-disclosure and the exemption at section 31 has been engaged in relation to these parts of the policy documents.

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/>

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.



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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 40 working 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