

19th October 2018

**Freedom of Information Request – Reference No:20181770**

**REQUEST**

**PART 1**

**1) (a) As of your last count (and please state the approximate date of this count) how many full time officers were employed with your force.**

**Please also state:**

- b) The total number of Taser officers**
- c) The total number of Firearms officers**

**2) Please also provide a breakdown of how many types of firearms police you currently employ. For example, how many are solely:**

**Authorised Firearms Officers (AFOs)  
Armed Response Vehicle Officers (ARVs)  
Specialist Firearms Officers (SFOs) (if any) Rifle Officers (if any) Counter Terrorism Specialist Firearms Officers (CTSFOs) (if any) Mobile Armed Support to Surveillance Officers (MASTS) (if any) DPG/PPO officers (if any) Nationally accredited detectives who are armed e.g. flying squad etc (if any) The number of, and specific roles of, any armed police who weren't mentioned above**

**I understand that in most forces a lot of these roles overlap so please provide only one designation per police officer.**

**PART 2**

**1) How many operations have firearms police been deployed on in the period of August 2016 to August 2018?**

**2) (a) How many Firearms offences have been recorded in the period of August 2016 to August 2018?**

**b) How many Violent Offences occurred in the period of August 2016 to August 2018?**

**3) How many officer assaults have you recorded in the period of August 2016 to August 2018?**

**4) If possible, could you tell me how many of said officer assaults constituted either s20 or s18?**

**RESPONSE**

**Part 1**

Workforce Planning have provided the following data to assist:

*The data is from 24 Sep 18.*

Q1(a) The officer headcount was 2404, which is 2364.58 'full time equivalents' (fte). These figures exclude officers on Career Break and on External Secondments. [ 2227 officers work 'full time' (40 hours per week) and 177 officers work 'part time'(less than 40 hours per week) hence the use of the fte figure]. I have not included a count for Special Constables who are volunteers and who work 'part-time'.

(b) There are currently 350 Taser Trainers District Officers, this number will fluctuate as the Force increases the number of Taser Trained Officers.

Q1 c and Q2 – Please see below

South Yorkshire Police can neither confirm nor deny that information is held relevant to your request as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply by virtue of the following exemptions:

**Section 24(2) National Security**  
**Section 31(3) Law Enforcement**

### **Evidence of Harm in Confirming or Denying that any other information is held**

Armed Policing requires important and often time-critical decisions to be made by Authorised Firearms Officers, some of whom may have undergone training to perform a particular specialised Armed Policing role. To confirm or deny whether information is or isn't held relating to any type of specialist firearms officer would provide a geographical map of where these officers are located which would identify vulnerable force areas and reveal sensitive tactical capability.

The Police Service has a positive duty to protect the public from harm and that duty of care to all involved must be the overriding consideration. Confirmation or denial that information is held, in this case, would be extremely beneficial to terrorist organisations and individual terrorists.

Furthermore, modern-day policing is intelligence led and irrespective of what other information may or may not be held, the flow of intelligence into police forces may reduce which would compromise the effective delivery of operational law enforcement within the Armed Policing arena which is a dynamic and ever changing operational environment.

### **Public Interest Considerations**

**Section 24(2) National Security**

#### **Factors favouring complying with Section 1(1)(a) confirming that information is held**

The public are entitled to know how public funds are spent and how resources are distributed within an area of policing. To confirm where authorised firearms officers who undertake a specialist firearms role are located by neighbourhood police/borough/divisional level would enable the general public to hold South Yorkshire Police to account to ensure the level of armed policing is appropriate and balanced.

In the current financial climate of cuts and with the call for transparency of public spending, this would enable public debate into this subject.

#### **Factors against complying with Section 1(1)(a) confirming or denying that information is held**

Security measures are put in place to protect the community we serve. As evidenced within the harm, to confirm information is held would highlight to terrorists and individuals intent on

carrying out criminal activity, tactical resource capability and vulnerabilities within South Yorkshire Police.

Taking into account the current security climate within the United Kingdom, no information (such as the citing of an exemption which confirms information is held, or conversely, stating 'no information held') which may aid a terrorist should be disclosed. To what extent this information may aid a terrorist is unknown, but it is clear that it will have an impact on a force's ability to monitor terrorist activity.

Irrespective of what information is or isn't held, the public entrust the Police Service to make appropriate decisions with regard to their safety and protection and the only way of reducing risk is to be cautious with what is placed into the public domain.

The cumulative effect of terrorists gathering information from various sources would be even more impactful when linked to other information gathered from various sources about terrorism. The more information disclosed over time will give a more detailed account of the tactical infrastructure of not only a force area but also the country as a whole.

Any incident that results from such a disclosure would, by default, affect National Security.

### **Section 31(3) Law Enforcement**

#### Factors favouring complying with Section 1(1)(a) confirming that any other information is held

Irrespective of what information may or may not be held, to confirm information exists relevant to Request 1 question 1 & 2(c) to (g) would lead to a better informed public which may encourage individuals to provide intelligence in order to reduce the risk of firearms incidents occurring.

#### Factors against complying with Section 1(1)(a) neither confirming nor denying that any other information is held

Confirmation or denial that information is held in this case would suggest South Yorkshire Police take their responsibility to ensure specialised officers are resourced dismissively and inappropriately.

### **Balancing test**

The points above highlight the merits of confirming nor denying that information exists with regard to request 2, questions 1 & 2(c) to (g). The Police Service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. As part of that policing purpose, information is gathered which can be highly sensitive relating to high profile investigative activity.

Weakening the mechanisms used to monitor any type of criminal activity, and specifically terrorist activity would place the security of the country at an increased level of danger.

In addition, anything that places that confidence at risk, no matter how generic, would undermine any trust or confidence individuals have in the Police Service. Therefore, at this moment in time, it is our opinion that for these issues the balance test favours neither confirming nor denying that any other information is held.

## **Part 2**

Q2 (a) & (b)

I approached our Crime Management Data Returns Administrator for assistance with your request. The CMS system and Connect System is used to record complaints or allegations of those matters, which the Home Office specify should be recorded as 'crimes'.

She conducted a search of the two crime management systems. (CMS - our legacy system which provides data up to 4th December 2017 and our new CONNECT system which records crimes from that date onwards)

For FOI requests such as this, we access the two separate systems and the retrieval and data extraction varies greatly dependant on the search capabilities and the inputted data. The information you receive therefore may be in two different formats depending on your time parameters, and the data we can provide which will be dependent on the search capabilities of each system. All our systems are designed and used first and foremost for Policing Purposes and have limited search capability.

She provided me with the enclosed spreadsheet and the following explanation of her search criteria:

*Please see the attached data and below explanation.*

#### CMS(ii) data

#### **6)How many Firearms offences have been recorded in the period of August 2016 to August 2018?**

*I have included a count of offences recorded on the CMS(ii) crime register where the weapon type is defined as a FIREARM has been recorded with the USED flag and the offence was recorded between 01-Aug-2017 and 04-Dec-2017, broken down by the Home Office offence class. In addition, I have provided a count of the specified possession offences where a Firearm has been recorded as Possessed, broken down by the Home Office offence. Please note 17 offences were recorded with both Used and Possessed flags.*

#### **7)How many Violent Offences occurred in the period of August 2016 to August 2018?**

*Refer to the breakdown by Home Office offence class, which shows all offence types including Violence against the person.*

#### CONNECT data

#### **6)How many Firearms offences have been recorded in the period of August 2016 to August 2018?**

*I have included a count of offences recorded on for CONNECT crime where the MO Desc 1 is Instrument Used and the MO Desc 2 is Firearm where the offence was recorded between 05-Dec-2017 and 30-Aug-2018, broken down by the date the offence was recorded and the Home Office offence class. In addition, I have provided a count of the specified possession offences, broken down by the Home Office offence class.*

#### **7)How many Violent Offences occurred in the period of August 2016 to August 2018?**

*Refer to the breakdown by Home Office offence class, which shows all offence types including Violence against the person.*

*Please note the following -*

- *Some offences may have been recorded in accordance with the Home Office Counting Rules – General Rules – The Principal Crime rule -*

*IF THE SEQUENCE OF CRIMES IN AN INCIDENT, OR A COMPLEX CRIME, CONTAINS MORE THAN ONE TYPE OF CRIME, THEN COUNT THE MOST SERIOUS CRIME.*

- *The data provided is **not** in line with the ADR 131 Firearms return which is required by the Home Office every quarter and as a result **all** offences involving a 'firearm' were included i.e. not specific circumstances of offence in line with the Home office requirement.*
- *If the requester wants a direct comparison for Firearms data across forces then every force returns ADR 131 in accordance with the Home Office requirement.*
- *We have had to take a slightly different approach to extracting the data from CONNECT as the data is not recorded in the same format as the legacy system CMS(ii). SYP have changed their central crime management system in December 2017. Therefore data from the new system cannot be used as a direct comparison due to the different ways in which crimes are recorded. However, the data has been given to comply with original request and displayed here to show an outline trend.*

Our HR Shared Services have provided the following:

Q3 *There were 299 Officers assaulted from 1 Aug 2016 to 31 August 2018.*

Q4 *HR do not record this.*

Q1-

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires South Yorkshire Police when refusing such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which

- states the fact,
- specifies the exemption and
- states (if it would not be apparent) why the exemption applies.

**Section 31 (1) (a) (b) Law Enforcement** states that information is exempt information if its disclosure under the Act would, or would likely to prejudice:

- The prevention or detection of crime;
- The apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

## **HARM**

It is important to stress that when a disclosure is made under the Freedom of Information Act, it is a disclosure to the world and not to a single individual. In view of this, we may publish information released under the Freedom of Information Act on our website in order that any member of the public who may wish to view the information can have access to it.

In considering whether this information should be disclosed, consideration has been given to the potential harm that would be caused by disclosure. The Police Service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. By releasing deployment details could potentially undermine delivery of operational law

enforcement. It is possible that anyone wishing to commit crime can build a picture of what resources are likely to be deployed and plan acts of crime accordingly. Disclosing this SYP capability may therefore prejudice the prevention and detection of crime.

## **PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Section 31 – Considerations favouring disclosure**

- Disclosure would demonstrate SYPs commitment to transparency and openness
- A full release of information would show that SYP is proactive in its operational policing and capabilities.
- Disclosure would provide better awareness, which may reduce crime or lead to more information from the public.

### **Section 31 – Considerations favouring non-disclosure**

- An impact on police resources, which would hinder the prevention or detection of crime and place individuals at risk.
- Police resources and the Force's ability to operate effectively and efficiently, would be affected as this information can be used by those with criminal intent to determine where officers may or may not be deployed at any one time.

## **ON BALANCE**

After considering the advantages and disadvantages of full disclosure, I have come to the conclusion that whilst there is a public interest in knowing SYP capabilities, the interest in safeguarding the protection of the public and the effective use of police capabilities and resources is of stronger interest to the Police Service. As such, I am not prepared to release this information.