

23rd April 2019

Freedom of Information Request – Reference No:20190814

REQUEST

Please could you supply the following information in relation to armed officers?

By armed officers, I refer to all officers authorised to use firearms, including operationally deployed armed officers and those training others in the use of firearms.

- 1. How many armed police officers did you have on 31 March 2014 (or nearest available date)?*
- 2. Of those referred to in question 1, how many were female?*
- 3. How many armed police officers did you have on 31 March 2019 (or nearest available date)?*
- 4. Of those referred to in question 3, how many were female?*

RESPONSE

I approached our Workforce Planning Unit and the Operational Support unit for assistance with your request. They were able to provide me with the following details for Q2 and Q4.

Q2 – 3 female AFO's in the force as of March 2014

Q4 – 4 female AFO's in the force as of March 2019

For the further questions in your request please see the following:

Q1

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

- a.states that fact,
- b.specifies the exemption in question and
- c.states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

The following exemption applies to the disclosure of the information:

Section 21 'Information which is reasonably accessible by other means'.

The Home Office routinely publishes statistics around firearms, including the number of AFOs.

The link to the 2014 numbers and then the most up to date numbers can be found below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-use-of-firearms-statistics-england-and-wales-financial-year-ending-31-march-2014-data-tables>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-use-of-firearms-statistics-england-and-wales-april-2017-to-march-2018>

Q3

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

- a. states that fact,
- b. specifies the exemption in question and
- c. states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies).

Section 22(1) - Information Intended for Future Publication

Information is exempt under S22(1) if the information is held by the Public Authority with a view to its publication, by the authority or any other person, at some future date (whether determined or not). This is a class-based exemption and requires me to conduct a public interest test.

Context

Verified figures as of March 2019 are likely to be published by Home Office by late July 2019

PUBLIC INTEREST CONSIDERATIONS

Considerations favouring disclosure

- Disclosure would be seen as embracing an ethos of openness, transparency and accountability.
- Disclosure would provide information necessary for public comment to take place in 'real-time'.

Considerations favouring non-disclosure

- The public will benefit from all of the facts being available at the same time.
- Figures released will be more comprehensive and give a clearer picture.

Balancing test

A release of information via FOI legislation, must be seen to benefit the community as a whole and it must clearly be shown that the benefits of such a disclosure at this particular time outweighs the publication of the information in the fullness of time. I do not think this is the case at this point in time.