National Police Chiefs' Council

National Police
Freedom of Information
and Data Protection Unit

c/o PO BOX 481
Fareham
Hampshire
PO14 9FS

Tel: 02380 478922
Email: npcc.foi.request@npfdu.police.uk

17/07/2026

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NUMBER: 2962/2026

Thank you for your request for information regarding CRU advice, which has now been considered.

Applicant Question:

Thank you for your response to FOI 2936/2026.

Without prejudice to any later request for internal review, I am willing at this stage to accept the section 16 advice offered and submit the following refined request as a fresh narrowed request.

Please provide:

1. The information identified in my original question 1, namely any policy, guidance, criteria or procedural documents governing:

a) CRU circulation/advice emails issued to police forces or other agencies concerning FOIA requests or requesters;
b) circumstances in which requester names may be circulated;
c) references within CRU material to WhatDoTheyKnow requests or requester activity.

2. A copy of the document/reference identified as "CRU 308/24", with any necessary personal data redactions applied, together with the Decision Notice referred to within that document.

3. The information identified in my original question 6, namely recorded information identifying:

a) the police organisations to which CRU circulation/advice references may be disseminated;
b) the "other agencies" referred to within CRU circulation material;
c) any policy, guidance or criteria governing dissemination beyond police forces.

4. Recorded information, guidance, policy, enquiries, briefings or other material held and relied upon in support of the statement contained within CRU 603/24 (email dated 25 June 2024, subject "OS – Request for Centurion information – CRU 603/24 – Advice attached") stating:

"I suspect that [SUBJECT] is keeping requests private on that site…"
https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/npcc_central_referral_unit_cru_f#comment-124942

This includes any recorded information held concerning:

a) whether requests made via WhatDoTheyKnow may be private, concealed or non-public;
b) any enquiries, checks or guidance relied upon in making that statement;
c) and any formal guidance or policy documents concerning the WhatDoTheyKnow platform relevant to that statement.

For the avoidance of doubt, I am not seeking personal email addresses or individual recipient details.

I also confirm that this is submitted as a narrowed fresh request following the section 16 advice provided, and is not intended to expand the wording of FOI 2936/2026.

NPCC Response:

The NPCC does hold some information captured by your request.

I have provided the following below:

1.a. The NPCC does hold some information captured by your request. The following has been extracted from wider CRU meeting minutes:

*'**OOD Process** – it was agreed that:*
A) OOD to take quick wins/emails that can be turned around quickly, for example:
o A new case is referred, and the force have attached their draft which is s12. OOD assess this is not harmful and can respond quickly to the force.
o A draft is received for an existing case already logged, OOD can take this and either refer to stakeholders if required or respond to force.

NEW CASES

For new national cases where a s12 response is not considered harmful (OOD assessment), the acknowledgment email will confirm this, prior to advice being compiled. If this is a mandatory referral it will still need to be logged.'

I have also attached an NPCC Governance Slide- which contains relevant information (also 1b). (caveat point 8 meetings no longer happen – any circulation has no name)'

b. The NPCC does hold information captured by your request.

I have attached an email detailing the new CRU process for data minimisation. It has been subject to minor redactions citing Section 40(2) Personal Information and Section 31(1) Law Enforcement. For more information

on the legislation and the risk of harm, please see Annex A below. The NPCC also holds a CRU governance document that is now outdated, but it relevant to your request. It has been subject to minor redactions citing Section 31(1) Law Enforcement.

c. The NPCC does hold information captured by your request. The information has been extracted from the NPCC FOI Manual of Guidance and has been provided below:

'*A valid address can be any address where the applicant can be contacted; postal, email, social media etc. In terms of social media websites, as long as there is a way of responding to the applicant then the requirements under section 8 have been met. For any requests made through the "What do they Know"3 website, the ICO considers the correspondence address @whatdotheyknow.com, as valid for the purposes of meeting section 8.'*

2. The NPCC does hold a copy of the CRU Advice issued for "308/24".

This has been withheld in full citing Section 36(2) Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs.

Section 36(2) is engaged as disclosure of this material would be likely to inhibit the free and frank provision of advice and exchange of views between the NPFDU Central Referral Unit and police forces. The CRU provides sensitive, candid advice to support operational decision-making, and there is a strong public interest in maintaining a 'safe space' in which such advice can be recorded without concern that it will be disclosed and subsequently misused or taken out of context. Disclosure in this case would be likely to undermine that safe space, leading to reduced candour and a detrimental impact on the quality and effectiveness of future advice. For more information on the legislation and the risk of harm, please see Annex A below.

3. a. All 43 territorial forces, Police service of Scotland, Police service of Northern Ireland, British Transport Police, Civil Nuclear Constabulary and Ministry of Defence Police.

b. The NPCC does hold some information. This would depend on the request and who the CRU needed to liaise/engage with.
Examples would include:

Governmental Departments (The Home Office, Cabinet Office, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Police and Crime Commissioners, College of Policing, Highways Agency, Road Safety Support.)

The NPCC can neither confirm nor deny any other information is held citing Section 23(5) Information supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters**.** For more information on the legislation and the risk of harm, please see Annex A below.

c. No information held.

4. No information held. Outside of the Freedom of Information Act, open source research shows that requests can be kept private for set periods of time via Pro - WhatDoTheyKnow.

Yours sincerely

50 Broadway
London
SW1H 0BL

info@npcc.police.uk
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COMPLAINT RIGHTS

Internal Review

Any request for an internal review will be acknowledged and responded to, based on the specific wording of your initial request only.

We ask that any rationale to request an internal review, does not include any requests for new information and ask that these be submitted by separate email. We will acknowledge as a new request and may aggregate to your initial request in compliance with the legislation.

If you are dissatisfied with the response you have been provided with in compliance with the Freedom of Information legislation, you can lodge a complaint with NPCC to have the decision reviewed within 40 working days of the date of this response.

The handling of your request will be looked at by someone independent of the original decision and a fresh response provided.

It would be helpful, if requesting a review, for you to articulate in detail the reasons you are not satisfied with this reply.

If you would like to request a review, please write or send an email to NPCC Freedom of Information, c/o PO Box 481, Fareham, Hampshire, PO14 9FS.

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London
SW1H 0BL

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Annex A

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the NPCC, when refusing to provide information by way of exemption in question and (c) states why the exemption applies. In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 this letter acts as a refusal notice to those aspects of your request.

Legislation – Section 16

(1) It shall be the duty of a public authority to provide advice and assistance, so far as it would be reasonable to expect the authority to do so, to persons who propose to make, or have made, requests for information to it.

Legislation – Section 23 Information supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters

(5) The duty to confirm or deny does not arise if, or to the extent that, compliance with section 1(1)(a) would involve the disclosure of any information (whether or not already recorded) which was directly or indirectly supplied to the public authority by, or relates to, any of the bodies specified in subsection (3).

This is an absolute exemption and there is no requirement to consider the public interest test.

Legislation - Section 31 Law Enforcement

(1) Information which is not exempt information by virtue of section 30 is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice -
(a) the prevention or detection of crime
(b) the apprehension or prosecution of offenders

Section 31 is a qualified and prejudice-based exemption. This requires the production of evidence of what prejudice may be caused and consideration as to the public interest in disclosure.

Disclosure of this information would have the likelihood of identifying specific vulnerabilities within policing, which would ultimately compromise police tactics, operations and future prosecutions. Any information identifying the focus of policing activity could be used to the advantage of terrorists or criminal organisations. Information that undermines the operational integrity of these activities will adversely affect public safety and have a negative impact on law enforcement. Public safety would be put at risk if criminals were able to counteract police tactics. The NPCC is committed to demonstrating proportionality and accountability.

Any information that could impact or undermine ongoing investigations or any future investigations would enable targeted individuals / groups to become tactically aware of the police capabilities. This would help subjects and avoid detection, and inhibit the prevention and detection of crime.

The NPCC will not disclose information which may hinder the effective management of law enforcement or place staff or officers at risk. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations and in this case providing assurance that the police service is appropriately and effectively managing this area of policing, there

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London
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is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the tactical abilities.

The prevention and detection of crime is the foundation upon which policing is built and the police service have a clear responsibility to prevent crime and arrest those responsible for committing crime or those that plan to commit crime. Disclosure of information captured by this request could directly influence the stages of that process, and jeopardise current investigations or prejudice law enforcement.

Some email addresses are contained within the correspondence and disclosure of direct contact details would enable an individual, intent on committing an offence to make contact with the department, pose as a police officer or member of police staff and try to glean information which would assist in their offending behaviour.

Disclosing information which may place the public at risk, or make it easier for crime to be committed cannot be in the public interest.

The police service primary performance indicator is the reduction of crime, and disclosure which has a negative impact on that agenda affects public trust in policing and in this case may make it more difficult to police.

With regard the evidence of harm itself, there is a threshold that requires the predicted issues to be 'more than likely'. In the case of an offender identifying full investigative techniques or gleaning information which would assist in offending behaviour can be difficult to establish and evidence the harm without actually disclosing exempt information. However, the principles are well established in terms of Freedom of Information legislation that to a certain extent the professional opinion of the police must be taken into account.

Legislation - Section 36 Prejudice to the conduct of Public Affairs

(1)This section applies to—
(a)information which is held by a government department or by [F1the Welsh Assembly Government] and is not exempt information by virtue of section 35, and
(b)information which is held by any other public authority.

(2) Information to which this section applies is exempt information if, in the reasonable opinion of a qualified person, disclosure of the information under this Act—
(a)would, or would be likely to, prejudice—
(i)the maintenance of the convention of the collective responsibility of Ministers of the Crown, or
(ii)the work of the Executive Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly, or
(iii)the work of the Cabinet of the Welsh Assembly Government.
(b)would, or would be likely to, inhibit—
(i)the free and frank provision of advice, or
(ii)the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation, or
(c)would otherwise prejudice, or would be likely otherwise to prejudice, the effective conduct of public affairs.

The NPCC CRU exists to provide guidance and advice on complex and often sensitive matters to support consistent and effective decision-making across policing. In order for this function to operate effectively, there must be confidence that advice can be provided candidly, comprehensively and without concern that internal discussions will be routinely disclosed into the public domain.

The withheld information comprises advice circulated between the CRU and police forces. Disclosure would be likely to prejudice the safe space necessary for the development and exchange of such advice, as contributors may become more guarded in expressing views, highlighting risks or exploring options if they believe their comments could later be made public. This inhibition would be detrimental to the quality, frankness and effectiveness of future advice, potentially resulting in less detailed and less robust consideration of issues. There is a real risk that information could be taken out of context or misinterpreted, which could further discourage open and candid engagement between the CRU and forces.

In considering the public interest, the NPCC recognises the general public interest in openness, transparency and accountability, particularly in relation to how policing organisations provide advice and support decision-making. Disclosure could contribute to a greater public understanding of the role of the CRU and the nature of the advice it provides to forces.

However, there is a stronger public interest in ensuring that police forces and the CRU can continue to communicate freely and frankly on sensitive matters. Effective policing relies on the availability of honest, well-informed and comprehensive advice, and there is a substantial public interest in preserving the safe space that enables such discussions to take place.

Disclosure would be likely to undermine that process, reducing candour and adversely affecting the quality of future advice and decision-making. For these reasons, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Legislation - Section 40 Personal Information

(1) Any information to which a request for information relates is exempt information if it constitutes personal data of which the applicant is the data subject.

(2) Any information to which a request for information relates is also exempt information if
(a) it constitutes personal data which does not fall within subsection (1), and
(b) the first, second or third condition below is satisfied.

(3A) The first condition is that the disclosure of the information to a member of the public otherwise than under this Act—
(a) would contravene any of the data protection principles, or
(b) would do so if the exemptions in section 24(1) of the Data Protection Act 2018 (manual unstructured data held by public authorities) were disregarded.

50 Broadway
London
SW1H 0BL

info@npcc.police.uk
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(3B) The second condition is that the disclosure of the information to a member of the public otherwise than under this Act would contravene Article 21 of the GDPR (general processing: right to object to processing).

Any information to which a request for information relates is also exempt information if it constitutes personal data which does not fall within subsection (1), and either the first or the second condition is satisfied.

Section 40(2) applies to third party personal data. Any release would breach the data protection principles contained within the Data Protection Act 2018. Section 40(2) has been engaged by virtue of Section 40(3)(a)(i). Any disclosure of withheld information would breach the first data protection principle of fair and lawful processing.

This is an absolute exemption and there is no requirement to apply the public interest test.

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