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27/02/2025

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NUMBER 061/2025

Thank you for your request for information regarding police suspected suicides; which has now been considered.

Applicant Question:

<https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/publications/disclosure-logs/workforce-coordination-committee/2024/246-2024-officer--staff-suspected-suicide-statistics.pdf>

With reference to the above, are you able to provide **more up to date data** on the number of 'suspected suicides' of serving and former police officers, up to and including the end of December 2024?

I'd like as much detail as you are able to give.

NPCC Response:

The NPCC does hold information captured by your request.

An inference has been made that you are seeking up to date information previously provided to an FOI applicant and published on the NPCC website, as you have provided within the wording of your request.

For full openness and transparency, the NPCC has collated data which captures 'suspected suicides', not a determination by HM Coroners.

The information is collected to assist in the identification of any emerging patterns to facilitate preventative action. Not all forces provide a return.

I can confirm that the following information is held from 01/01/2022 – 31/12/2024:

	Male	Female
Former Police Officer	21	1
Former Police Staff	5	0
Serving Police Officer	34	5
Serving Police Staff	8	10
Total	68	16

Although deceased individuals are not afforded the same rights under the Data Protection Act, under the same auspices of Section 40(5B), the welfare of individuals related to the deceased must be taken into consideration.

The NPCC review each request on a case by case basis, and in this instance, the information you have requested related to suspected suicides of police officers and staff engages S38(2) Health & Safety, to protect the personal information and physical or mental health, as well as the safety of individuals still living.

For further information relating to the legislation, please see Annex A.

In wishing to explain further, any information disclosed under the Act is a disclosure to the world at large and would be disclosed to any individual upon request. For this reason a request under the Act is not a private transaction. Both the request itself, and any information which may be disclosed, are considered suitable for open publication. Therefore, when considering whether information is suitable for disclosure, a public authority is entitled to consider the effect of disclosure to any individual.

Considerable guidance is available from the Samaritans on the reporting of suicide. Suicide is a major public health concern and is therefore a subject that is very much in the public interest and whilst sensitive reporting can inform and educate the public about suicide and the signs to look out for, there is strong and consistent research evidence that some forms of news reporting lead to increases in suicide rates.

[Media Guidelines](#)

Yours sincerely

Sherry Traquair
Freedom of Information Officer & Decision Maker

www.npcc.police.uk

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 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.

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.

The legislation - Section 38 Health & Safety

(1) Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to— (a) endanger the physical or mental health of any individual, or (b) endanger the safety of any individual.

(2) The duty to confirm or deny does not arise if, or to the extent that, compliance with section 1(1)(a) would, or would be likely to, have either of the effects mentioned in subsection (1)

Section 38 is a qualified exemption which means that even if information is exempt, a public authority is under a duty to consider whether disclosure should nevertheless be made in the public interest.

As above, any information disclosed under the Act is a disclosure to the world at large and would be disclosed to any individual upon request. For this reason a request under the Act is not a private transaction.

Both the request itself, and any information which may be disclosed, are considered suitable for open publication.

Therefore, when considering whether information is suitable for disclosure, a public authority is entitled to consider the effect of disclosure to any individual.

In order for Section 38(1) to be engaged it must be the case that release of the specified information would, or would be likely to (a) endanger the physical or mental health of any individual, or (b) endanger the safety of any individual.

The public authority must also show that disclosure would or would be likely to have a detrimental effect on the physical or mental health of any individual, or the safety of any individual. The effect must be more than trivial or insignificant. The NPCC has a duty of care to the surviving families and friends.

It is not simply the risk of surviving families and friends being identified by others that is of concern, but also that surviving families and friends would identify their former colleague, friend or family member from any records released and suffer mental harm and anguish as a consequence. The likelihood of mental trauma to surviving families and friends is real and significant and not a remote or hypothetical risk of mental harm. Some of the breakdown you have requested results in very low numbers, in turn increasing the risk of identification.

Factors in favour of disclosure

It is recognised that transparency is the fundamental objective of the Freedom of information Act and this leads itself to a presumption of disclosure. The release of any potential information held would provide evidence of

police openness and transparency. Additionally, suicide is a major public health concern and is therefore a subject that is very much in the public interest.

Factors in favour on non-disclosure

Balanced against the arguments you have put forward, the following points need to be considered.

If information is released, there is a real possibility of surviving families and friends suffering mental trauma. Any surviving families and friends would not reasonably expect that through FOIA disclosures, information would be placed into the public domain that could lead to their identification via colleague, friend or family member, thereby denying their right to privacy.

There is no guarantee that all such potential surviving families and friends, who could reasonably be expected to be trying to lead a normal life, possibly doing their best to forget any trauma they suffered, would want the same exposure. Disclosure, of information is held, could prompt unwanted questions and interest from colleagues, friends, relatives and acquaintances causing extreme personal anguish and significant distress.

As above, the NPCC has a duty of care to surviving families and friends. Release of the information would not be in their best interests. The likelihood of mental trauma to surviving families and friends is real and significant and not a remote or hypothetical risk of mental harm.

Additionally, providing details of suicide methods has been linked to increases in suicide rates and shown to influence vulnerable people to imitate suicidal behaviour. Providing information about a method, for example describing someone as having died by hanging, can reinforce awareness of specific methods, and increase perceptions of its effectiveness, especially if prominently featured. Publishing information about locations is also likely to result in more deaths at that location especially where providing details of a location if it is a public place such as a cliff, bridge or railway line.

Balancing test

The NPCC places significant weight on protecting individuals from the risk to their physical and mental wellbeing. In consequence, disclosure will only be justified where a compelling reason can be identified. It is the NPCC's assessment that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure