

Chief Constable
Chief Constable Robert Carden
Police Headquarters
Carleton Hall Penrith,
Cumbria
CA10 2AU



12th March 2025

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST – FOI 216/25 Drug Supply OCG's

I refer to your request for information received by Cumbria Constabulary on 14th of February 2025. I note you seek access to the following information:

How many OCGs involved in drugs supply are there in your area for the most recent calendar year?

Your request for information has now been considered and I can confirm that Cumbria Constabulary do hold information relevant to your request; however, I will be citing the exemption Section 31 (1)(a)(b) Law Enforcement.

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

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

Section 31(1) (a) (b) Law Enforcement states: -

Information which is not exempt information by virtue of section 31 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 prejudice based, qualified exemption which means that it is necessary to describe the harm that is likely to occur if the information is released into the public domain. There is also a requirement to consider whether the public interest considerations in favour of withholding the information you have requested outweigh the considerations in favour of its release.

Harm test



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Every effort should be made to release information under Freedom of Information. However, a FOIA response is a release to the world, as once the information is published, the public authority has no control over what use is made of that information.

Providing the requested information would reveal specific detail about the real-time police intelligence picture in relation to OCG's operating across the force area. Release of such information to the public at large would enable those engaged in criminal gang activity, potentially including terrorism, to identify what the police may and may not know about organised crime gangs.

Furthermore, if disclosures were to be made by all forces for this national request, a low-level intelligence picture of organised criminal gang activity would be revealed which would expose the specific focus of policing targets, including terrorists, across the UK. The security of the country is of paramount importance and the police will not disclose any information that would undermine operational policing.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure - S31

Disclosure of the requested would allow the public to see where public funds have been spent and allow the Police service to appear more open and transparent.

Factors against disclosure - S31

The Police Service has a duty to deliver effective law enforcement ensuring that the prevention and detection of crime, apprehension or prosecution of offenders and administration of justice is carried out appropriately.

Disclosure of the requested information could compromise police intelligence and subsequently the force's ability to prevent and detect crime. Cumbria Constabulary would not want to undermine any local or national operations which may be taking place to combat the distribution of drugs. The information would directly relate to very specific intelligence and being able to map this across the country would be of use to criminal groups.

Balance Test

The security of the country is of paramount importance and the Police service will not divulge any information, if to do so would undermine law enforcement and therefore compromise the work of the police service.

The points above highlight the merits for and against disclosure of the requested information. Disclosure would undoubtedly provide a greater openness and transparency to the community at large and whilst there is always a public interest in the transparency of how a police force delivers effective law enforcement, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding information which can be operationally sensitive. I believe protecting the tactical capability of Cumbria Constabulary must take precedence in this case. It is my decision that the balance of the public interest lies in the non-disclosure of the exempted information.



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Complaint Rights

If you believe your request has not been properly handled, or you are otherwise dissatisfied with the outcome of your request, you have the right to request an internal review.

In the first instance, please email freedomofinformation@cumbria.police.uk quoting the FOI reference number and explain why you are dissatisfied. Your complaint will be considered and a response will be provided to you after your complaint has been investigated.

If you remain dissatisfied following conclusion of the internal review, you have the right, under section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to complain directly to the Information Commissioner.

The address for the Information Commissioner can be found below:

The Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Complaints to the Information Commissioner can also be made online:

[Make a complaint | ICO](#)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your interest in Cumbria Constabulary.



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