

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



31st January 2025

Dear

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST – FOI 40/25 OCG data**

I refer to your request for information received by Cumbria Constabulary on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2025. I note you seek access to the following information:

- 1. Number of organised crime groups in your force area.*
- 2. Where these organised crime groups are distributed in your force area.*

*For the years:*

2023-2024  
2022-2023  
2021-2022  
2020-2021  
2019-2020

Your request for information has now been considered and I can confirm Cumbria Constabulary does hold some information relevant to your request and where this is the case I have today decided to disclose this to you.

The information in response to question 1 of your request has been provided by the Constabulary's Intelligence Department. Please note that the information is recorded in calendar year and not financial year.

Question 1-

2024 – 123  
2023 – 104  
2022 – 90  
2021 – 81  
2020 – 72  
2019 – 69

With regards to question 2 of your request I can confirm that Cumbria Constabulary do hold the information requested, however the information is exempt from disclosure.

Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act requires a public authority, when refusing to confirm or deny information is held must provide the applicant with a notice that: -



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- a) States that fact,
- b) Specifies the exemption, and
- c) States, if it would not otherwise be apparent, why the exemption applies.

The exemption which is applicable in this case is: -

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

Section 24(2) National Security and Section 31(3) Law Enforcement are both qualified, prejudice-based exemptions, therefore I must state the harm in disclosing information as well as completing a public interest test, which is set out below.

#### Evidence of Harm:

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.

To disclose any details about the distribution of (number of) organised crime gangs (OCGs) below a force level total would undermine national security and operational law enforcement as well as risk prejudice to current investigations, some of which may be covert. Whilst there is a public interest in transparency to provide assurance that the Police Service is appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat from organised criminal gangs, this should be balanced against the need to protect sensitive police intelligence and ongoing operational activity.

Providing the requested information would reveal specific detail about the real-time police intelligence picture in relation to OCG's operating at low geographical areas 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. Particularly in the event it was to be revealed that no information was held for a specific area, that would identify to offenders that individuals or criminal activity to which they may have links has gone undetected.

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 national security or operational policing.

#### Public Interest Test

##### **Factors favouring disclosure, Section 24:**

Disclosure of the information would lead to a better-informed public. The public are entitled to know how public funds are spent especially with regards to safeguarding National Security.

##### **Factors against disclosure, Section 24:**

Disclosure of the requested information would allow inferences to be made about the specific nature of national security related activities linked to organised crime gangs which may or may not take place in low level geographical locations. This would enable criminal groups



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to take steps to counterintelligence, and as such, disclosure would be damaging to National Security.

Disclosure of the requested breakdown would render national security measures less effective. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or infrastructure of the UK and increase the risk of harm to the public.

### **Factors favouring disclosure, Section 31:**

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, Section 31:**

Disclosure of the requested information could compromise police intelligence and subsequently the force's ability to prevent and detect crime. Vulnerable areas could be identified with disclosure leading to an increase in criminal activity occurring in those areas, placing the public in harm's way.

Modern-day policing is intelligence led and the police share information with other law enforcement agencies as part of their investigation process. Disclosure here could hinder the prevention and detection of crime by undermining this partnership approach to investigations and law enforcement.

### Balancing 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. I am aware of the immense importance for Public Authorities to demonstrate a level of openness and transparency, however, the effective delivery of operational law enforcement is of paramount importance to Cumbria Constabulary in their duty to ensure that the prevention and detection of crime is carried out and the effective apprehension or prosecution of offenders is maintained. It is my decision that the balance of the public interest lies in the non-disclosure of the exempted information.

### 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](mailto: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



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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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