

Chief Constable
T/Chief Constable Darren Martland
Police Headquarters
Carleton Hall Penrith,
Cumbria
CA10 2AU



30 July 2025

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST – FOI 693/25

I refer to your request for information which was received by Cumbria Constabulary on 2 July 2025. I note you seek access to the following information:

Under the Freedom of Information Act, I would like to request the following information:

- 1. How many traffic collisions have there been where nitrous oxide has been involved per year?
Please provide data separately for each year: 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024.
Please provide as much data for 2025 as possible closest to the current day.***
- 2. How many of those traffic collisions involving nitrous oxide have resulted in one or more fatalities? Please specify how many for each incident.***
- 3. How many arrests have been recorded for the illegal sale of nitrous oxide from the start of 2019 to the 2nd of July 2025?***

Your request for information has been considered and I can confirm that Cumbria Constabulary does not hold all the information you seek in an easily retrievable format.

In relation to Questions 1 and 2, as there is currently no test for Nitrous Oxide, unlike alcohol and drugs such as cannabis/cocaine. We would need to conduct a manual search of our Road Traffic Collision (RTC) data, custody records and other associated records, to ascertain if inhaling/consuming Nitrous Oxide was mentioned in the reports as a possible factor. Although signs of nitrous oxide usage such as empty cannisters and balloons may appear in the vehicle after a RTC, to prove that this was the cause is difficult when also taking into account cases where drivers were tested positive for other drugs such as cocaine.

We hold in excess of 1000s of reports and based on the minimum of 1000 reports at approximately 5 minutes per report, would take at least 83 hours.

This would be a very large amount of work and I have estimated that it would exceed the "appropriate limit" as stated in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. The current limit for police forces has been set at £450, which equates to 18 hours of work. Section 12(1) of the Act does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit.



EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

BRONZE AWARD

Proudly supporting those who serve.



In accordance with Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act this section acts as a Refusal Notice for your request, by virtue of Section 12(1) of the Act.

In accordance with my duty under Section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act, 2000 (Duty to provide advice and assistance), I have tried to think of a way to recommend that your request may be refined to bring it under the limit explained above. At this time, unfortunately, I have no suggestions, due to the way that the information requested is recorded.

However, as a gesture of goodwill and in keeping with the duty to provide advice and assistance under Section 16 of the Act, I can provide you with some information which has been retrieved within the 18-hour limit.

Question 3 - How many arrests have been recorded for the illegal sale of nitrous oxide from the start of 2019 to the 2nd of July 2025?

The data below is based on custody records for persons arriving in a custody suite for the following suspected offences:

- Possess with intent to supply nitrous oxide for wrongful inhalation – Class C drug
- Supply nitrous oxide for wrongful inhalation – Class C drug

Please note that these offences were only ratified in November 2023 and as such the results only reflect offences from that date to 30 June 2025.

2023	2024	2025
(01/01/2023-31/12/2023)	(01/01/2024-31/12/2024)	(01/01/2025-30/06/2025)
0	7	3

The above data is a count of distinct persons arrested, and not a count of crimes, as a person may be arrested for more than one offence.

Police forces in the United Kingdom are routinely required to provide statistics to government bodies and the recording criteria is set nationally. However, the systems used for recording these figures are not generic, nor are the procedures used locally in capturing the data. It should be noted that for these reasons this force's response to your questions should not be used for comparison purposes with any other response you may receive.

Whilst every care has been taken in the retrieval of the information provided, please do not hesitate to contact us for clarification, if you do have any issues or queries relating to this data.

Complaint Rights

Your attention is drawn to the attached sheet, which details your right of complaint.

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

