

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



18th November 2025

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST – FOI 1418/25 Digital Forensics

I refer to your request for information which was received by Cumbria Constabulary on 20th October 2025. I note you seek access to the following information:

I'd like to request the following information under the FOI Act. It concerns investigations which involve digital forensics.

- 1. How many staff in your force/contractors are currently assigned to work on digital forensics (examining digital devices seized for evidence as part of investigations).*
- 2. What is the current average time it takes to examine a device (from seizing to completion).*
- 3. What is the current backlog of digital devices which your force needs to examine. Could I also have a breakdown of devices - ie phones, ipads etc.*
- 4. How many current investigations involve examining digital devices and what percentage of your total number of ongoing investigations is this?*
- 5. What is the current waiting time for the device which has been waiting to be investigated the longest and what kind of allegation/investigation does this relate to?*
- 6. If a contractor firm is used to carry out this work, could I please ask what it is and how much the firm is paid.*
- 7. If the cost limit has not yet been reached, could I please ask what the answer was to question two in each of the most five recent calendar years. (IE) 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020.*
- 8. If the cost limit has still not been reached, could I please ask for the answer to question three for 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020. Please provide an average backlog figure.*

Your request for information has now been considered, and I can confirm that the information you seek is held by Cumbria Constabulary, however, I am not obliged to disclose this to you.

In relation to question 4, the system used to log digital forensics has no way to identify which devices are connected to each investigation directly, this means that the actual number of investigations using digital forensics cannot be directly retrieved. There may also be multiple devices connected to one investigation. To answer question 4, it would require going through each and every open investigation to assess which cases involve digital forensics to get a figure.

There are currently 5579 open investigations, if each case takes one minute to assess if digital forensics are involved then it would take approximately 92 hours to get a figure for this



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question alone. I am satisfied, therefore that the time required to respond to your request will significantly exceed the “appropriate limit” of time allowed.

The “appropriate limit” is set out in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 and the current limit for police forces is set at £450, which equates to 18 hours of work.

Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information 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 will exceed the appropriate limit. In view of this, and in accordance with Section 17(5) of the Act, this letter serves as a Refusal Notice for your request.

Notwithstanding the above, in anticipation it will still be of interest to you, it is possible to provide you with some of the information requested in the remaining questions, as it was possible to retrieve this information directly. This is information I would otherwise have advised you to submit a revised request to seek disclosure of in accordance with the duty to provide advice and assistance.

Question 1.

The Digital Forensic Unit has 13 members of staff examining devices.

Question 2.

We do not hold averages.

Question 3.

Please note: we cannot specify the exact breakdown by device. Instead, we can breakdown by type.

The current backlog of devices includes 362 mobile devices and 149 other media.

Question 4.

While we cannot directly identify the exact number of investigations currently open involving examining digital devices, I can provide you with the number of devices currently waiting to be allocated to a member of staff. The system currently has 153 mobile submissions yet to be allocated to an examiner, and 43 computer submissions yet to be allocated to an examiner.

Question 5.

The current waiting time for the device which has been waiting to be investigated the longest is 11 months and this relates to the offence of Possessing Extreme Images.

Question 6.

We do not outsource any of our digital forensic submissions.

Question 7.

Please see Question 2.

Question 8.

Please see Question 2.

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



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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

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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