

Our Ref: FOI 12586
Your Ref: FOI 12489
Date: 30/10/2020

Internal Review

Re: Request for internal review of response to application for information under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, original request first notified to Staffordshire Police on 29th September 2020

I refer to the above request which was expressed in the following terms:

Dear Staffordshire Police, Please pass this on to the person who conducts Freedom of Information reviews. I am writing to request an internal review of Staffordshire Police's handling of my FOI request 'NHS COVID-19 app'. Thank you for your response in which you clearly deal with point 1. In respect of point 2, you have applied cite exemptions suggesting that redactions have been applied to protect the personal information of individuals(s) and to protect criminal investigations. Having looked at the short redactions it is difficult to believe that the inclusion of the hidden text would either identify any individual or compromise police investigation or assist criminals, unless of course Staffordshire Police are aware of vulnerabilities within the NHS app that criminals could exploit. The Prime Minister, senior MP's and SAGE advisors have all made it clear that the NHS app is an important part of the Track and Trace system vital to helping control the spread of the deadly COVID virus, to support the Track and Trace system the government have introduce far reaching powers to ensure citizens self- isolate when instructed to do so by the NHS. The police have been given access to the data from Track and Trace to allow them to identify individuals that have been told to self- isolate and where necessary to issue high fines to those who breach the self-isolation rules. It is difficult to understand why those key workers (police) who have a essential part to play in making Track and Trace measures work are not themselves using the app that other citizens are expected to use. Given that Staffordshire is about to go into the higher level of restrictions very soon due to the rapid increase of COVID cases, the effectiveness of Track and Trace is very important. Police officers and staff, are required to meet people in the course of their employment, and therefore are at an increased risk of exposure to COVID, by



prohibiting them from the protection offered by the NHS App, Staffordshire Police are exposing staff and the wider community to increased risk of the virus. Unless Staffordshire Police feel that using the app poses a greater risk than exposure to the virus itself, it is difficult to understand the rationale of the decision. By redacting the documents provided Staffordshire Police are being less than transparent, preventing the public from fully understanding the rationale for the decision and raising concerns over the security/safety of the App. In respect of point 3 the response is "no information held", for this response to be correct it would mean that either no officers or staff have reported having the virus or that Staffordshire Police do not record such information. Either possibility is difficult to believe and I ask that this point be revisited, the number of officers /staff affected by the virus is of interest to the public given that they may have come into contact with these officers /staff members. In considering the response to point 3, I would ask that you take into account any emails or force bulletins that may have been issued providing welfare messages concerning officers/staff that had contracted COVID.

**** FOI REQUEST 12489 ****

The Government is strongly recommending that all citizens download and use the NHS COVID-19 app to assist the NHS Test and Trace. The advice suggests that downloading the app will help control the spread of the virus and will therefore save lives.

Police officers and police community support officers are on the front line when it comes to controlling the virus, and as such are at an increased risk of exposure to the virus and therefore an increased risk of spreading the virus.

Could you please provide the following information under the Freedom of Information Act:-

1. Does Staffordshire Police permit or encourage officers and staff to download the NHS COVID-19 app on mobile phones provided to them by Staffordshire Police.
2. What advice or instructions have been issued to Staffordshire Police officers or staff in regards to downloading or using the NHS COVID-19 app on their personally owned mobile phones whilst at work. With regards to this request please include any advice or instructions which may have been issued by National Policing Bodies which was then circulated or reproduced by Staffordshire Police on the force Intranet or in any force bulletin, email or publication.
3. Please provide the number of Officers and Police Staff that have reported to Staffordshire Police that they or a family member have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus from the start of the virus to the current date.



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Upon review of your request for information under the Freedom of Information provision, referenced above, and all corresponding communication. I am of the opinion that the response issued, alongside all clarification provided, fully answers the terms of your request.

I also confirm that the application of all exemptions outlined within this response are fully justified, and that the explanations and rationale for their application conveyed clearly and unequivocally.

Please be advised that all FOI requests and response letters will shortly be published on the Staffordshire Police website although personal details will not be included.

If you are not content with the outcome of the review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner to investigate. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 08456 30 60 60 or 01625 54 57 45

Freedom of Information Management Team
Central Disclosure Unit
Staffordshire Police