



# HM Courts & Tribunals Service

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Sam Smedley  
request-362546-19ac1444@whatdotheyknow.com

Our Ref: FOI/107847

27 October 2016

## Freedom of Information Request

Dear Sam Smedley

Thank you for your email of 3 October 2016 in which you asked for the following information from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ):

*Please release the following information for Teesside Crown Court and Newcastle Crown Court under the Freedom of Information Act -*

- 1) How many weapons have been seized in the last 5 years: 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011.*
- 2) How many times have the police become involved regarding weapon confiscation, from each of the last 5 years: 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011*

Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Your request has been passed to me because I have responsibility for answering requests relating to HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS). HMCTS is an executive agency of the MoJ and is responsible for managing the Magistrates' Courts, the Crown Court, the County Courts, the High Court, The Court of Appeal and Tribunals in England and Wales and non-devolved tribunals in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

I can confirm that the department holds some of the information that you have asked for. The information that you have requested on confiscated items is not collected by HMCTS. The information relating to confiscated items is provided by the security company who are responsible for providing services at all the courts. The security company supply the information to HMCTS and are responsible for collating and verifying the accuracy of the statistics

The information that you have requested for the courts has been provided by the security company and I have listed this for you in "Annex A" herewith. The data for the year 2013 is incomplete as the data was not available for provision from April to July 2013. This is due to a transition in the security contract period. This does not

mean that items were not confiscated during this period of time, just that the volumes have not been provided.

Please also note that the data is for the Teesside Combined Court Centre and Newcastle Combined Court Centre and as such will include items taken from people attending the County Court, as well as the Crown Court. We are unable to differentiate between as it is a combined court entrance.

HMCTS has a robust security and safety system to protect all court users and the judiciary.

The system includes mandatory bag searches, the use of modern security searching equipment and surveillance cameras, as well as Court Security Officers with the powers to restrain and remove people from the building should there be a need. Our security system is continually monitored to ensure that it is effective and proportionate and mitigates against the risks faced.

In regards to part 2 of your FOI request, I am unable to provide this information as it is not recorded by the security company. I can however advise that the following action is taken by security officers when confiscating illegal items:

- If a knife is deemed legal to own, the person wanting his or her knife returned is required to write to the court and request its return with 28 days. This practice applies, for example, where somebody might attend court and have a penknife in his or her possession. In relation to the statistics in Annex A, this would apply to knives with a blade that is less than 3" long. If the item is not collected it will then be handed into the police to be destroyed
- Fixed Blade knives are reported to the police immediately
- Genuine Firearms and Replica Firearms are reported to the police immediately
- Items such as tools, cameras, recording equipment, alcohol and other items are only retained for the period their owners are at court. Afterwards, these items are returned to their owners

You can also find more information by reading the full text of the FOIA (available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents>).

You have the right to appeal our decision if you think it is incorrect. Details can be found in the 'How to Appeal' section attached at the end of this letter.

#### Disclosure Log

You can also view information that the MoJ has disclosed in response to previous FOI requests. Responses are anonymised and published on our on-line disclosure log which can be found on the MoJ website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/series/freedom-of-information-disclosure-log>

Yours sincerely

NE RSU FOI and DPA team

## How to Appeal

### Internal Review

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to an internal review. The handling of your request will be looked at by someone who was not responsible for the original case, and they will make a decision as to whether we answered your request correctly.

If you would like to request a review, please write or send an email **within two months of the date of this letter** to the Data Access and Compliance Unit at the following address:

Data Access and Compliance Unit (10.34),  
Information & Communications Directorate,  
Ministry of Justice,  
102 Petty France,  
London  
SW1H 9AJ

E-mail: [data.access@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:data.access@justice.gsi.gov.uk)

### Information Commissioner's Office

If you remain dissatisfied after an internal review decision, you have the right to apply to the Information Commissioner's Office. The Commissioner is an independent regulator who has the power to direct us to respond to your request differently, if he considers that we have handled it incorrectly.

You can contact the Information Commissioner's Office at the following address:

Information Commissioner's Office,  
Wycliffe House,  
Water Lane,  
Wilmslow,  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF  
Internet address: <http://www.ico.org.uk/>

## Annex A

### Confiscated items

Teesside Combined Court

	KNIVES Over 3" BLADE	KNIVES Under 3" BLADE	Knives - Fixed Blade	FIREARMS (GENUINE)	FIREARMS (REPLICA)	FIREARM (OTHER)	TOOLS	CAMERAS	RECORDERS	ALCOHOL - Drink	SHARPS (General)	OTHER*	TOTAL
Years				Guns Etc	Toys / BB Guns	CS Gas / Tazers / Cartridges etc				Drink etc	Syringes / Needles / Darts	All other items	
2011	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	37	245	49	31	91	462
2012	0	1	0	0	0	0	18	126	5	0	1	11	162
2013	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	45	9	34	4	16	116
2014	1	1	0	0	0	0	11	59	21	1	1	12	107
2015	0	10	0	0	2	4	20	51	18	18	13	7	143
Total	1	21	0	0	2	4	57	318	298	102	50	137	990

\*Others - Any items which, in the opinion of the court security officer, could be used as a weapon; cause a hazard to others in the building; or could be used to disrupt court proceedings. Items have included umbrellas, aerosols and soft drink cans (this list is not exhaustive).

Newcastle Combined Court

Years	KNIVES Over 3" BLADE	KNIVES Under 3" BLADE	Knives - Fixed Blade	FIREARMS (GENUINE)	FIREARMS (REPLICA)	FIREARM (OTHER)	TOOLS	CAMERAS	RECORDERS	ALCOHOL - Drink	SHARPS (General)	OTHER*	TOTAL
				Guns Etc	Toys / BB Guns	CS Gas / Tazers / Cartridges etc				Drink etc	Syringes / Needles / Darts	All other items	
2011	3	80	0	2	0	0	5	174	532	143	161	9537	10637
2012	7	22	0	0	2	0	248	147	77	41	0	3010	3554
2013	10	91	0	0	12	0	668	333	100	114	0	8207	9535
2014	61	32	0	0	0	0	539	194	78	111	0	8191	9206
2015	0	87	2	0	0	2	303	172	37	142	17	8780	9542
Total	81	312	2	2	14	2	1763	1020	824	551	178	37725	42474

\*Others - Any items which, in the opinion of the court security officer, could be used as a weapon; cause a hazard to others in the building; or could be used to disrupt court proceedings. Items have included umbrellas, aerosols and soft drink cans (this list is not exhaustive).