



Ministry of Justice

National Offender Management Service

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Ella Wilks-Harper
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Our Reference: FOI 107922

22 March 2017

Freedom of Information Request

Dear Ms Wilks - Harper

Thank you for your two emails of 4 October 2016, in which you asked for the following information from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ):

- 1) The number of knife arches used in HM Prison Pentonville and where in the prison they are used, from January 2013-the present day or last day where data is held.**
- 2) How many knives have been detected, in possession by visitors and prisoners (please provide separate figures), through the use of knife arches in HM Pentonville, from January 2013-the present day or last day where data is held.**
- 3) The number of knife assaults in Pentonville prison from January 2013-the present day or last day where data is held.**

And

- 1) The number of knife arcs used in Pentonville Prison and where in the prison they are used.**
- 2) The number of prisoners and visitors (in separate figures) caught carrying a weapon/knife in the prison and the different kinds of weapons found.**
- 2) How many weapons/knives have been detected through the knife arcs.**

Your request has been handled under the FOIA. Please accept my apologies for the delay in this response.

Where more than one request is received for the same or similar information, section 5(2) of the FOI and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 allows public authorities to aggregate requests and respond to them together I have therefore aggregated your requests dated

I can confirm that the department holds the information that you have asked for. However, some of it is exempt from disclosure under section 22(1) of the FOIA, because it is intended for future publication.

Question 1

HMP Pentonville at the time of your original request had two permanent, fixed metal detector arches; one in the visitors search area for every visitor to pass through and one in the Reception area for every prisoner received into Pentonville to pass through.

There is also a mobile metal detector arch which can be utilised anywhere needed within the establishment.

Question 2

We are not obliged to provide information that is intended for future publication under the terms of section 22 of the FOIA. Weapons finds in each prison establishment since 2013 are planned for publication in due course.

This is a qualified exemption which means that the decision to disclose the information is subject to the public interest test. When assessing whether or not it was in the public interest to disclose the information to you, we took into account the following factors:

Public interest considerations favouring disclosure

- Disclosure would improve transparency in the operations of Government, and of the justice system in particular.
- It is considered in the public interest to disclose historical information about drug finds in prisons, where that information has previously been disclosed before the pre-announcement as set out above.

Public interest considerations favouring withholding the information

- It is in the public interest to adhere to the existing publication process for official statistics, which includes time for the data to be collated and properly verified.
- It is also in the public interest to ensure that data used in the compilation of official statistics comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and that resulting outputs are produced to the highest quality. Statistics of high quality are produced to sound methods, with all users having easy and equal access that is fair and open, and are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest. Premature publication could undermine the principle of making the information available to all at the same time through the official publication process.

On balance, I consider the public interest favours withholding the information at this time.

In addition, under section 44(1)(a) we are also not obliged to provide information if there are prohibitions on disclosure 'by or under any enactment'. In this case, the information you are seeking is prohibited by the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 and the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008.

The information you have requested is a subset of finds of mandatory reportable items in prison establishments data, held in its final form, which we have pre-announced the intention to routinely publish as Official Statistics. As such we are required to consider your request in a manner compliant with the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008 further to sections 11 and 13 of the Statistics and Registration Service (SRS) Act 2007.

The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and the MoJ produce Official Statistics under the standards set by the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority). The Authority is obliged under Section 7 of the SRS Act to promote and safeguard the production and publication of Official Statistics that serve the public good, with

particular reference to good practice and quality. The Authority achieves this through the Code of Practice for Official Statistics (the Code). Protocol 2 of the Code reflects the requirements of the Pre-Release Access to Statistics Order. Specifically, it requires producers of Official Statistics to ensure that no indication of the substance of a statistical report is made public, or given to the media or any other party not recorded as eligible for access prior to publication.

We can confirm that NOMS will publish information on weapons finds in prison establishments as part of Official Statistics. Therefore, I consider that to now disclose as part of your FOI request, would undermine the provisions of section 7 of the SRS Act and violate the Pre-Release Access Order to Official Statistics 2008 and as such engages the exemption under section 44(1)(a).

Question 3

The number of assaults involving knives or bladed weapons at HMP Pentonville:

2013 - 7

2014 - 21

2015 - 22

This data is up to the end of 2015 only because figures beyond this point are exempt under sections 22 and 44 for the reasons stated above. These figures have been drawn from the NOMS Incident Reporting System. Care is taken when processing and analysing the returns but the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large scale recording system.

You may find the following Safety in Custody publication link helpful:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics>

Safety in prisons is fundamental to the proper functioning of our justice system and a vital part of our reform plans.

We take a zero tolerance approach to illicit material in prisons and work closely with the police and CPS to ensure those caught are prosecuted and face extra time behind bars.

Appeal Rights

If you are not satisfied with this response you have the right to request an internal review by responding in writing to one of the addresses below within two months of the date of this response.

data.access@justice.gsi.gov.uk

Data Access and Compliance Unit, Ministry of Justice, 10.38, 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ

You do have the right to ask the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to investigate any aspect of your complaint. However, please note that the ICO is likely to expect internal complaints procedures to have been exhausted before beginning their investigation.

Yours sincerely

Security Group

National Offender Management Service

