

15 April 2025

**IC-371379-C7D0**

## Request

You have requested information regarding the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS).  
You asked us for:

*"Please provide, in respect of the period from 1 June 2023 to 1 March 2025:*

*(a) the number of data protection complaints received by the ICO in relation to the Metropolitan Police Service;*

*(b) a copy of all correspondence sent or received between the ICO and the MPS containing information (in whole or in part) relating to the MPS' handling of data subject access requests;*

*(c) a copy of all meeting minutes relating to meetings between the ICO and the MPS containing information (in whole or in part) relating to the MPS' handling of data subject access requests; and*

*(d) a copy of emails and other internal correspondence, relating to the ICO's consideration of the MPS's handling of its data subject access requests."*

We received your request on 20 March 2025.

We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the FOIA).

## Our response

We confirm that we hold some information in scope of your request. However, the work required to locate some of the requested information would breach the cost limit set out in section 12 of the FOIA.

Section 12 makes it clear that a public authority is not obliged to comply with a FOI request if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the 'appropriate limit'. The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 stipulates that the 'appropriate limit' for the ICO is £450. We have determined that £450 would equate to 18 hours work.

Our casework management system enables us to run reports and search for information about cases according to our business needs. Between the dates specified, the ICO received 596 complaints about the MPS that have a primary complaint reason recorded as either Article 15 UK GDPR, or Section 45 of the Data Protection Act 2018 (the DPA). Both reasons relate to a complaint made about a subject access request (SAR). Whilst we can confidently say that these complaints relate to the handling of a SAR, other complaints that have been submitted to the ICO may also reference SARs that are not included within this category.

For example, within the time frame specified, the ICO received 186 FOI complaints that may refer to an FOI request submitted about the MPS handling of SARs. Further, there may be data protection complaints that have a different primary reason recorded due to the overarching complaint reasons being about another matter, however the complainant, case handler or the MPS may have mentioned the MPS handling of SARs within their correspondence. We therefore cannot exclude the possibility that these cases would also fall within scope of your request.

To know the full extent of the information in scope of questions (b), (c) and (d), we would need to manually review all complaints recorded about the MPS to determine whether they make reference to the handling of SARs. The total number of data protection and FOI complaints that the ICO has received about the MPS is 915 complaints. To establish whether the handling of a SAR is mentioned, we would need to read every email, case note and document on the 915 cases.

Searching each piece of correspondence in relation to these complaints would take a considerable amount of time. Even if each case held one email, and in most cases, there is considerably more, this would require a significant number of resources to search. I am satisfied based on the number of cases that would require searching that handling the request you have submitted would take longer than 18 hours and therefore exceed the cost limit. Further time would then be required to review the correspondence and consider it for disclosure, taking into consideration the confidentiality afforded to the complainant and the MPS in each case.

For these reasons, questions (b), (c) and (d) exceed the appropriate limit set under section 12 of the FOIA. However, we have provided some advice and assistance below that you may find useful.

### **Advice and assistance**

To assist with narrowing the scope of questions (b), (c) and (d), we have conducted a dip sampling exercise of the data protection complaints with a primary complaint reason recorded as either Article 15 or Section 45 (SARs). There are 596 cases that fall within scope. I have reviewed 10 cases at random to determine how long it would take if you reduced the scope of your request to exclude FOI complaints and other data protection complaints without these primary reasons.

Of the 10 cases reviewed, it took between 1 and 5 minutes to review the correspondence on these cases, this included checking correspondence received from the complainant, the MPS and internal emails and notes from the case officers. If it took an average of 3 minutes to check each of the 596 cases, this would still take over 18 hours to manually review these cases.

Any request that requires us to manually search large numbers of records is likely to exceed the appropriate limit. Whilst we may be able to manually review records if the time frame was shorter, consideration would also need to be given as to whether there would be any value in the results. We would consider whether the effort needed to conduct the searches is proportionate to the value gained by the public from the information derived from such searches, particularly given that any correspondence falling within scope of the request would likely be heavily redacted owing to the confidentiality afforded to the complainants and the MPS in these cases.

However, we can provide you with a response to question (a). Between 1 June 2023 and 1 March 2025, the ICO received 729 data protection complaints about the MPS.

Further, we can advise that to assist with answering question (c), we have made enquiries with the relevant internal departments. We can confirm that we do not hold any meeting minutes with the MPS about their general handling of SARs. Whilst it is unlikely, we cannot say with certainty whether any minutes have been taken by case handlers in response to the handling of an individual complaint. To provide this information, we would need to manually review each case and as explained, this is not possible within the 18-hour time limit.

The MPS publishes details of the request handling performance on their website, you may find this information useful: [Right of access performance dashboard | Metropolitan Police](#)

Further, we have previously responded to a request about the MPS, please see the response on our disclosure log: [IC-290380-W5C3 | ICO](#). If you are interested in the work being undertaken to deal with their backlog of SARs, it may be more practical to contact the MPS directly.

This concludes our response to your request.

## **Next steps**

You can ask us to review our response. Please let us know in writing if you want us to carry out a review. Please do so within 40 working days.

You can read a copy of our full [review procedure](#) on our website.

If we perform a review but you are still dissatisfied, you can complain to the ICO as regulator of the FOIA. This complaint will be handled just like a complaint made to the ICO about any other public authority.

You can [raise a complaint](#) through our website.

## **Your information**

Our [privacy notice](#) explains what we do with the personal data you provide to us, and sets out [your rights](#). Our [Retention and Disposal Policy](#) details how long we keep information.

Yours sincerely,



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