

Gloucestershire Constabulary
Police Headquarters
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Your reference:

Our reference: FOI_26_0456

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Date: 10/07/2026

Dear

Gloucestershire Constabulary Freedom of Information request FOI_26_0456

On 12/05/2026 you sent an email constituting a request under the Freedom of Information Act asking the following:

1. How many cases have involved 3D printers in each of the last 4 years?
2. How many of these led to a conviction?
3. How many instances of 3D printers being used to create illegal weapons, or parts for illegal weapons, have been investigated in each of the last 4 years?
4. How many of these led to a conviction?

Gloucestershire Constabulary can neither confirm nor deny that it holds information relative to your request as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply by virtue of the following exemptions:

Section 23(5) – Security Bodies

Section 24(2) – National Security

Section 31(3) – Law Enforcement

Sections 23 is a class based absolute exemption and there is no requirement to evidence harm or consider the public interest test.

Sections 24 and 31 are qualified prejudice-based exemptions and it is therefore required to consider the harm in disclosure and conduct a public interest test.

Evidence of Harm

Confirmation or denial that information is held would identify regional activity regarding the use and/or seizure of 3D printed weapons, which in turn risks identifying the level of police awareness of such weapons in the force area. When a request is made to multiple forces, there is a further risk in that confirmation or denial would reveal information which could be used to build a picture as to where national and local investigations and operations are taking place, and perhaps more pertinently where they are not, to combat the supply, distribution and use of these weapons. This mapping effect, created by forces either confirming information is held and citing a substantive exemption or, conversely, stating 'no information held', would undermine the effective delivery of operational law enforcement by revealing the intelligence picture of the force in respect of 3D printed firearms as well as compromising potentially ongoing investigations, some of which may or may not be of a covert nature.

It is widely accepted and acknowledged that criminals and those involved in nefarious activities monitor FOI requests, therefore it must be considered that responding in full to an FOI request would entail releasing information into the wider public domain and allow such individuals to have access to any information disclosed. The threat from terrorism cannot be ignored. It should be recognised that the international security landscape is increasingly complex and unpredictable. The UK faces a sustained threat from terrorists and hostile actors. Releasing any information which could directly impact policing activity or be of value to criminal individuals, serious and organised crime groups, terrorists and hostile actors would risk undermining operational integrity of policing which would have an adverse effect on public safety and risk impacting any ongoing investigations at both a local and national level.

Public Interest Tests

Section 24 (2) National Security

Factors favouring disclosure

Ultimately, the police are accountable to the communities they serve. Confirming or denying the requested information would enable greater public transparency and allow the public to be greater informed around the topic area and prompt public debate around how policing resources are allocated and how threats are managed.

Factors against disclosure

Confirming or denying whether information is held would risk undermining counter terrorism and serious crime operations by revealing sensitive intelligence, operational focus, or investigative capability. Any such disclosure could be exploited by those seeking to cause harm, increasing the risk to the public. Therefore, any information that may lead to compromise of national security which ultimately affects law enforcement capabilities and hinders the prevention and detection of crime or terrorism, is not in the interest of the public to be disclosed.

Section 31(3) Law Enforcement**Factors favouring disclosure**

To confirm or deny that this information is held would make members of the public more aware of the threat of certain offences and the forces ability to deal with them. Improved public awareness may lead to more intelligence being submitted to police surrounding the topic area of 3D- printed firearms which in turn may result in a reduction of crime.

Factors against disclosure

To confirm or deny that the requested information is held could compromise law enforcement tactics which would hinder the Police force's ability to prevent and detect crimes. This could place the public at an increased risk of harm.

Balancing Test

The security of not only the Constabulary but the country is of great importance, and the Constabulary will not divulge any information if to do so would undermine overarching law enforcement goals or pose a risk to wider national security.

Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing and the topic area. There is also a very strong public interest in protecting information to ensure that key police operations are able to proceed unhindered.

The points above highlight the merits for and against disclosure of the requested information. Disclosure would undoubtedly provide a greater public awareness around the topic area. However, there is an overwhelming public interest in ensuring the National Security of the United Kingdom is maintained

In every case, public safety is the paramount focus and the disclosure of any information which would place individuals and the Constabulary at risk or risk compromising the National Security of the United Kingdom, is not in the public interest. This would have a negative impact on law enforcement and national security.

If you are not satisfied with this response or any actions taken in dealing with your request, you have the right to ask that we review your case under our internal procedure. Please note that a request for an internal review must be made within 20 working days of the response to your original request.

If you decide to request that such a review is undertaken and following this process you are still unsatisfied, you then have the right to direct your complaint to the Information Commissioner for consideration.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following means:

Website - <https://ico.org.uk/>

Call their helpline - 0303 123 1113

Email - casework@ico.org.uk

Post – Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Disclosure Officer
Gloucestershire Constabulary