

Gloucestershire Constabulary
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Our reference: FOI_ 26_0738

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Date: 16/09/2026

Dear

Gloucestershire Constabulary Freedom of Information request for: 26_0738

On 03/08/2026 you sent an email constituting a request under the Freedom of Information Act asking the following:

For the period 1 June 2025 to 30 June 2026 inclusive, please provide the following information from all data force wide.

Please electronically search crime-report text fields for the terms:

- a. "balaclava"
- b. "bally"
- c. "face covering"

Please provide:

1. The number of unique crime reports containing one or more of these terms.
2. A breakdown of these reports by the most commonly recorded offence type.
 - a. The age group of suspects linked to these reports, broken down as:
 - i. under 18;
 - ii. 18–24;
 - iii. 25 and over;
 - iv. age unknown or not recorded.
3. The number of these reports that resulted in:
 - a. an arrest;
 - b. a charge;
 - c. no further action.
4. The number of occasions during the same period where a balaclava, "bally" or face covering was recorded as seized or recovered by officers, with a breakdown by associated offence type.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 s1, I can confirm that Gloucestershire Constabulary may hold some relevant information.

We are committed to being an anti-discriminatory organisation. This means not only acting in a non-discriminatory way, but addressing systemic inequalities, disadvantage and discrimination.

Police Forces in the United Kingdom are routinely required to provide statistics to government bodies and the recording criteria is set nationally. However, the systems used for recording these figures are not generic, nor are the procedures used locally in capturing the data. It should be noted that for these reasons the figures given relate to information from the specific recording system of Gloucestershire Constabulary and should not be used for comparison purposes with any other response you receive.

Please note that our systems are designed to record information for policing purposes and the investigation of crime and not to extract statistical information. Accordingly whilst we endeavour to extract relevant data within the time limits of the Act, any data supplied is subject to these limitations.

Unfortunately, within the systems currently used by Gloucestershire Constabulary, when an offender has an unknown age this will be present while searching for "Under 18" which would considerably skew the figures within that age bracket. The only way of trying to determine whether the relevant and correct information is held and to retrieve that information would be to manually review each crime recorded. An initial search of the crime recording system between 01/06/2025 and 30/06/2026 using the keywords "balaclava", "bally", "face covering" within the MO freetext has identified over 1,700 records that would need to be reviewed which would obviously take far longer than the 18 hours prescribed by the Freedom of Information Act.

In regard to the number of occasions during the same period where a "balaclava", "bally" or "face covering" was recorded as seized or recovered by officers unfortunately there is no central register for this information and no way to retrieve the information by way of electronic searches. The only way of trying to determine whether any relevant information is held and to retrieve that information would be to manually review each incident.

Please see below for suggestions on how you may be able to refine your request to come within the cost constraints of Section 12 of the Act.

Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Gloucestershire Constabulary, when refusing to provide information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which: (a) states the fact, (b) specifies the exemption in question and (c) states (if not otherwise apparent) why the exemption applies.

In relation to your request Section 12 applies.

Section 12(1) – Fee Regulations states:

Section 1(1) of the Act does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit. (As detailed in the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Fees Regulations of 2004)

The appropriate limit at the moment is £450 calculated at an hourly rate of £25 per hour for all staff time incurred in:

- i. Determining whether information is held
- ii. Locating it
- iii. Retrieving it
- iv. Extracting the information to be disclosed from the other information.

In accordance with the Act, this letter represents a Refusal Notice for your request.

Providing Information Outside of the Act

By way of assistance and although excess cost removes the Force's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, we have supplied the information relevant to your request which has already been retrieved. We trust this is helpful but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request.

Section 16 – unable to assist

Unfortunately, I'm unable to assist in suggesting ways of refining your request to come within the confines of Section 12 of the Act. Even reducing the timescale would not reduce the number of records enough that a manual review could be conducted within the timescale but still provide meaningful information.

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