



Response Date:09/01/2024

2024/1137 - Sodium Nitrite

In response to your recent request for information regarding;

- 1. From April 1st 2024 to present:**
 - a. The number of reports where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - b. The number of attendances where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - c. The number of deaths attended where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - d. The number of welfare checks made relating to sodium nitrite.**
- 2. From April 1st 2023 to March 31st 2024:**
 - a. The number of reports where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - b. The number of attendances where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - c. The number of deaths attended where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - d. The number of welfare checks made relating to sodium nitrite.**
- 3. From April 1st 2022 to March 31st 2023**
 - a. The number of reports where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - b. The number of attendances where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - c. The number of deaths attended where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - d. The number of welfare checks made relating to sodium nitrite.**
- 4. April 1st 2021 to March 31st 2022**
 - a. The number of reports where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - b. The number of attendances where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - c. The number of deaths attended where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - d. The number of welfare checks made relating to sodium nitrite.**
- 5. April 1st 2020 to March 31st 2021**
 - a. The number of reports where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - b. The number of attendances where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - c. The number of deaths attended where sodium nitrite was recorded.**
 - d. The number of welfare checks made relating to sodium nitrite.**

If you are minded refusing on time and cost grounds, please answer as much as possible sequentially from question 1.

Concerns have been raised in relation to providing the information requested. Therefore, a public Interest Test has been carried out to weigh up the reasons for and against disclosure; to ensure the release is in the interest of the public as a whole and not just the applicant.

Section s31(1) Law Enforcement

Section 31 (1) is a prejudice based qualified exemption, therefore there is a requirement to articulate the harm that would be caused in confirming or not that the information is held as well as carrying out a public interest test.

The Harm Test process requires North Wales Police to consider any possible harm that might arise as a result of placing the requested information into the public domain. This process considers the potential harm to:

- Individuals
- The community as a whole

- North Wales Police and the wider policing service
- Other bodies

Harm in respect of s31(1) Law Enforcement

The FOI Act is 'applicant blind'. This means that we cannot, and do not, ask about the motives of anyone who asks for information. In providing a response to one person, we are expressing a willingness to provide the same response to anyone. In this instance the information requested relates to the use of a specific substance as a cause of death, and would reveal the extent by which its use has had tragic effect as a poison.

Death as a result of poisoning could be caused by accident, but also on purpose. Disclosure of a total figure would reveal any ongoing investigations, which would have an undermining effect in the event that any criminal matters are under inquiry, thus hindering the prevention and detection of crime.

To disclose the number of deaths relevant to one specific substance would set a precedent over disclosure in relation to any other named substances; revealing the viability of each substance set against any other. This would have an adverse risk on public safety, whether that means vulnerable members of society who seek to end their own life, or any other person with mal-intent.

Considerations in favour of disclosure

There is some recent media reporting in relation to poisonings and the use of Sodium Nitrate. Disclosure would be informative, and allow for wider public discussion over such matters.

Considerations in favour of withholding the information

Disclosure of information that undermines the operational integrity of law enforcement capabilities is highly likely to have an adverse impact on public safety and a negative effect on law enforcement generally. This risk to public safety cannot be said to be in the public interest.

Balancing Test

Law enforcement is of paramount importance and the Police service will not disclose information if to do so, it would undermine its purpose and place the safety of individual(s) at risk. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of using public money in policing appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat posed by criminals, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the integrity of police investigations and operations.

As much as there is public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced in matters of law enforcement, this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. Any disclosure which hinders our capability and assists criminals cannot be in the public interest.

The public interest is best served by maintaining the exemption and withholding the information.

Therefore, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter acts as a Refusal Notice under section 17 (1) of the legislation.

THIS INFORMATION HAS BEEN PROVIDED IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST
UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000, AND IS CORRECT AS AT 08/01/2025