



**HEDDLU
GOGLEDD CYMRU
NORTH WALES
POLICE**

Response Date:05/03/2025

2025/210 - User data requests

In response to your recent request for information regarding;

The number of requests for user data made by the North Wales Police to the following companies since 2015 to date. Please provide separate figures for each company, broken down by calendar year.

- Google / Alphabet
- Apple
- Microsoft
- Facebook / Meta
- Twitter / X
- TikTok
- Snapchat

Please note: We are only able to provide figures back to 2022 as this is the only data available.

Network	2022	2023	2024
• Google / Alphabet	159	165	201
• Apple	22	25	46
• Microsoft	62	60	73
• Facebook / Meta	189	279	265
• Twitter / X	11	5	8
• TikTok	32	21	22
• Snapchat	208	321	370

North Wales Police can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any further information in relation 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 24(2) National Security

Section 31(3) Law Enforcement

With Sections 24 and 31 being prejudice based qualified exemptions, there exists the requirement to articulate the harm that would be caused in confirming or not whether information is held as well as carrying out a public interest test.

Disclosure under FOIA is considered a release to the public at large. Whilst not questioning the motives of the applicant, confirming or denying that any other information is held regarding the number of requests made during investigations of a covert nature to the companies in question would reveal levels of policing activity at the most serious levels of crime, including terrorism. This could result in identifying whether one or more companies might be more or less used by criminals and therefore the likely focus of police enquiries than others, which would lead to an increase of harm to covert investigations and compromise law enforcement. This would be to the detriment of providing an efficient policing service and a failure in providing a duty of care to all members of the public.

The threat from terrorism cannot be ignored, and it is well established that police forces use covert tactics and surveillance to gain intelligence in order to counteract criminal behaviour. As such, it has been previously documented in the media that many terrorist incidents have been thwarted due to intelligence gained by these means.

Confirming or denying that any other information is held may also suggest the limitations of police capabilities and the success rate of determining which companies will be more or less compliant upon request. Such results, if held, may further encourage criminal/terrorist activity by exposing potential vulnerabilities. This detrimental effect is increased if the request is made to several different law enforcement bodies. This can be useful information to those with mal-intent. It would have the likelihood of identifying location-specific operations which would ultimately compromise police tactics, operations and future prosecutions as criminals could counteract measures that might be used against them, such as altering online behaviour to avoid detection.

Any information identifying the focus of policing activity could be used to the advantage of terrorists or criminal organisations. Information that undermines the operational integrity of these activities will adversely affect public safety and have a negative impact on both national security and law enforcement.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring Confirming or Denying for Section 24

Any further information, if held, simply relates to national security and confirming or denying whether it is held would not actually harm it. The public are entitled to know what public funds are spent on and how effective policing and security measures are. By confirming or denying whether any other information is held regarding such requests to these companies for the purposes of covert investigations would lead to a better informed public.

Factors favouring Neither Confirming Nor Denying for Section 24

By confirming or denying whether any other information is held would render Security measures less effective. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or infra-structure of the UK and increase the risk of harm to the public.

Factors favouring Confirming or Denying for Section 31

Confirming or denying whether any other information is held relevant to this request would provide an insight into North Wales Police. It would greatly assist in the quality and accuracy of public debate, which could otherwise be steeped in rumour and speculation about covert police investigations accessing data from the aforementioned companies. Where public funds are being spent, there is a public interest in accountability and justifying the use of public money.

Factors against Confirming or Denying for Section 31

Confirming or denying that any other information is held relevant to this request would have the effect of compromising law enforcement tactics and would also hinder any future investigations. In addition, confirming or denying methods used to gather intelligence for an investigation would prejudice that investigation and any possible future proceedings.

It has been recorded that FOIA releases are monitored by criminals and terrorists and so to confirm or deny any other information is held concerning the level of, or lack thereof of covert tactics would lead to law enforcement being undermined. The Police Service is reliant upon all manner of techniques during operations and the public release of any modus operandi employed, if held, would prejudice the ability of the Police Service to conduct similar investigations.

North Wales Police would not wish to reveal whether or not any companies relevant to this request have been approached for the purpose of acquiring data covertly as this would clearly undermine the law enforcement and investigative process. This would impact on police resources and more crime and

terrorist incidents would be committed, placing individuals at risk. It can be argued that there are significant risks associated with providing information, if held, in relation to any aspect of investigations or of any nation's security arrangements so confirming or denying that any information is held, may reveal the relative vulnerability of what we may be trying to protect.

Balance test

The security of the country is of paramount importance and North Wales Police will not divulge whether any other information is or is not held if to do so would place the safety of an individual at risk, undermine National Security or compromise law enforcement.

Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations and providing assurance that the police are appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat posed by various groups or individuals, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the integrity of police investigations and all areas of operations carried out by police forces throughout the UK.

As much as there is public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. Acquiring data via any covert capacity is a sensitive issue that would reveal police tactics and therefore it is our opinion that for these issues the balancing test for confirming or denying whether any other information is held for this request, is not made out.

However, this should not be taken as necessarily indicating that any information that would meet any future request exists or does not exist.

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 04/03/2025