



Response Date:30/09/2025

2025/907 - Disaster Victim Identification

In response to your recent request for information regarding;

I would like to request the following information relating to Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) provision within your force. Where possible, please provide total counts disaggregated by gender where this information is recorded. I generally expect yes/no responses, but any additional context would be gratefully appreciated.

1. Staffing and Deployment

*** The number of officers/staff currently trained in DVI within your force (please indicate gender if recorded).**

Concerns have been raised in disclosing the number of employees trained in DVI. 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)(a)(b) Law Enforcement

Section 31 (1)(a)(b) 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

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Therefore, Section 31 (1) (a) Law Enforcement is to be considered as part of the Public Interest Test. A Public Interest Test has been carried out to weigh up the reasons for and against disclosure of the information requested, to ensure the release is in the interest of the public as a whole and not just the applicant.

Evidence of Harm:

DVI is a specialism held by police forces across the country in numbers sufficient that in the event of a disaster on the largest scale that sufficient DVI trained personnel can respond. However, to release details of the exact number of officers trained in DVI in a force-by-force manner would not only reveal individual force capability, but it would also create a mosaic effect across the country showing areas of capability and, more pertinently, potential vulnerability. It should be remembered that a release of information under FOI is not a private transaction, it is a disclosure to the world. It is known that criminals and those with criminal intent routinely monitor information made publicly available under FOI, consequently, for those that would seek to commit criminal acts, revealing the areas of capability and vulnerability could then be used to gain an advantage resulting in further criminal activity which places the public at increased risk.

Public Interest test

Factors favouring disclosure:

Disclosure of this information would adhere to the basic principle of being open and transparent and would provide better awareness which may in turn reassure the public.

Factors favouring non-disclosure:

Where the current or future law enforcement role of the police may be compromised by the release of information, the effectiveness of the police service will be reduced. Providing the requested information would allow those who seek to commit criminal acts the ability to understand operational capabilities of police forces. This would undermine police resources in their primary function of law enforcement and public protection, ultimately putting the public at risk. Any disclosure of information which would undermine the Police service's ability to serve the public and protect them from harm is not in the public interest to disclose.

Balancing Test

For a public interest test, issues that favour disclosure need to be measured against issues that favour non-disclosure. The ability to deliver effective law enforcement is of paramount importance and North Wales Police will not divulge information if to do so would have an adverse effect on the force's ability to prevent and detect crime.

The strongest argument for disclosure is increased public awareness and scrutiny around officer numbers, allowing for accurate debate around this subject and demonstrating a willingness by the force to be open and transparent. However, this needs to be weighed against the strongest argument for non-disclosure, which, in this case, is that releasing the requested information could provide a tactical advantage to those intent on

criminal behaviour and would not only impact on the force's ability to prevent and detect crime and apprehend offenders, but also its core responsibility of protecting the community it serves and its officers.

Therefore, on balance, it is considered that the public interest in providing the information is outweighed by the potential impact release would have on future law enforcement activities, and this represents a refusal notice for this request.

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

*** The number of DVI-trained officers/staff deployed in the last five years, and the categories of incidents they were deployed to (please group as: terrorism, transport incidents, industrial accidents, and natural disasters) - total numbers only, to preserve anonymity.**

Unable to provide exact numbers, as it is not recorded. However there have been 4 DVI deployments in the last 5 years, road traffic collisions.

*** Which department or unit within the force is responsible for DVI planning and deployment.**

Operational Planning Department supports with the training aspects and ensuring that we have the necessary equipment for deployments.

*** The typical length of service an officer/staff member remains active on the DVI roster once trained (e.g., average number of years, or whether there is a set term).**

Unable to give an answer as to an average number of years, as it is not recorded, but there is no set term.

*** Whether your force applies any suitability checks or criteria prior to deployment of DVI-trained officers (e.g., health, psychological readiness, or operational availability).**

Operational availability is considered, pre-screening will be introduced for future DVI-trained officers.

THIS INFORMATION HAS BEEN PROVIDED IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST
UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000, AND IS CORRECT AS AT 29/09/2025