| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information Response Our reference: FOI 24-2094  Responded to: xx September 2024 |
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Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

## I am seeking details on Police Scotland's policy regarding tattoos, specifically in relation to recruitment and employment.

## Please provide the following information:

## 1. Tattoo Policy: A copy of the current policy or guidelines used by Police Scotland to assess tattoos during the recruitment process. Please include any documentation or criteria used to determine whether a tattoo is considered offensive, undermines authority, or is otherwise deemed inappropriate.

## The current version of the Uniform and Appearance Standards V3.00 Standard Operating Procedure is published online.

The information sought is held by Police Scotland, but I am refusing to provide it in terms of section 16(1) of the Act on the basis that the section 25(1) exemption applies:

“Information which the applicant can reasonably obtain other than by requesting it […] is exempt information”.

The information sought is publicly available: [Uniform & Appearance Standards SOP v3](https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/fsjpeu0n/uniform-appearance-standards-sop.pdf)

## 2. Application Cancellations: The number of applications for employment with Police Scotland that have been cancelled, rejected, or withdrawn specifically due to tattoos being judged as offensive or as undermining the authority of the police. Please provide this data for the past five years, broken down by year if possible.

I must first advise you that our data retention policy is 2 years + current year for rejected applicant information, so we do not hold data for the entire period requested.

Furthermore, as of January 2022, Recruitment switched from paper applications to online applications and we are only able to provide data captured on our E-recruitment system from this date. Paper application forms prior to this date did not record tattoo rejections, therefore cannot be reported on.

As the information sought prior to 2022 is not held by Police Scotland, section 17 of the Act therefore applies.

On that basis, the requested information is provided in the table below:

|  | **2022** | **2023** | **2024\*** | **Total** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No of applicants | 23 | 13 | 24 | **60** |

\*Data correct as at 28/08/2024

## 3. Decision-Making Authority: Information on who within Police Scotland is responsible for setting and enforcing the rules and guidelines regarding tattoos. Please clarify whether these decisions are made by a specific department, committee, or individual, and detail the role of personal judgment or discretion in these decisions, also what is deemed not acceptable.

This information is contained within Uniform and Appearance Standards (Police Officers) version 3.00, as referenced in our response to Q1, above.

In regard to ‘enforcing the rules and guidelines regarding tattoos’, during the recruitment process, applicants are asked to submit photographs of all tattoos at time of application. These photographs are reviewed by a Recruitment Officer as part of the shortlisting process.

If during this review the Recruitment Officer suspects the tattoo may not align with policy, the tattoo is referred for a supervisory review. The supervisor can either make a determination or refer for a candidate case review.

A candidate case review is conducted within the Recruitment Department by a group of supervisors and managers with extensive Policing and recruitment experience. A collective decision is made as to whether the tattoo in question aligns to current policy, or otherwise.

If the collective determination is that the tattoo does not align with policy, a supervisor will contact the candidate to advise and will discuss the possibility of having the tattoo altered prior to an offer of appointment being issued, should they be successful in the remainder of the recruitment process.

## 4. Appeal Process: Information on whether there is an appeal process for applicants who have had their applications cancelled due to their tattoos, and if so, the details of this process.

There is no specific appeal process following rejection of a tattoo. The Police Scotland recruitment process is open for that candidate to reapply at any time in the future so long as any tattoos are aligned to our Uniform and Appearance Standards.

If you require any further assistance please contact us quoting the reference above.

You can request a review of this response within the next 40 working days by [email](mailto:foi@scotland.police.uk) or by letter (Information Management - FOI, Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH). Requests must include the reason for your dissatisfaction.

If you remain dissatisfied following our review response, you can appeal to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner (OSIC) within 6 months - [online](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal), by [email](mailto:enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info) or by letter (OSIC, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, KY16 9DS).

Following an OSIC appeal, you can appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

This response will be added to our [Disclosure Log](http://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log) in seven days' time.

Every effort has been taken to ensure our response is as accessible as possible. If you require this response to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know.