| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information ResponseOur reference: FOI 24-0228Responded to: xx February 2024 |
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Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

## How many police officers are currently serving areas where there are proposed police station closures? (If possible, please detail this data per area rather than a combined total.)

I have interpreted your requests to refer to those sub-divisions where the aforementioned police stations are located.

Accordingly I am unable to provide you with details of how many officers are currently serving areas where there are proposed station closures.

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 following exemptions apply:

* Section 35(1)(a)&(b) - Law Enforcement
* Section 39(1) - Health, safety and the environment

Disclosure would prejudice substantially the prevention or detection of crime and apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

It would also endanger the physical health and the safety of individuals.

If the number of police officers typically based at a specific station/ in a particular small area were disclosed, experience has shown that it would allow those intent on committing crime or causing disorder to gauge the likelihood of detection or to take measures to negate the likelihood of detection.

It would allow criminals to plan how best to engage or occupy existing police resources in an effort to maximise their chances of committing serious crime, therefore harming the efficient and effective conduct of the service.

As a consequence, disclosure would also increase the risk of harm to officers and members of the public. This will be particularly relevant in geographic areas with a lower number of officers.

The exemptions listed above require the application of the Public Interest Test.

Public accountability would favour disclosure, given that the information concerns the efficient and effective use of resources. Likewise, disclosure would also inform the public debate on the issue of policing and contribute to the accuracy of that debate.

However, the applicability of the exemptions listed above, the need to ensure the effective conduct of the police in relation to prevention and detection of crime and the public safety considerations involved in the delivery of operational policing clearly favour non-disclosure of the information requested.

On balance I would contend that the public interest in disclosing the information is outweighed by that in maintaining the exemptions listed, as, it is doubtful if it can ever be in the public interest to disclose information which would prejudice the prevention or detection of crime or, which would jeopardise the delivery of operational policing and the safety of officers and police staff.

By way of assistance, Police Officer numbers are available online:

[Police Scotland Officer Numbers - Police Scotland](https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/how-we-do-it/police-scotland-officer-numbers/)

## How many police officers will serve the areas if the police stations close? (If possible, please detail this data per area rather than a combined total.)

I can confirm that changes to Police Scotland’s estate have no linked effect to officer numbers and accordingly in terms of Section 17 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, this represents a notice that the information you seek is not held by Police Scotland.

The statement above confirms that our presence in communities is not defined by buildings but by the officers and staff who work there, and we have already introduced technology that enables our officers to remain in local areas, reducing the need for them to return to police stations to deal with paperwork.

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 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 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.