



Operation Escudo 2024 Publication Strategy

Merseyside Police has produced the below Publication Strategy in anticipation of a substantial number of requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 relating to Operation Escudo/Labour Party Conference 2024. The strategy aims to provide a transparent approach to FOI requests, detailing the information the Force intends to publish. Producing such a strategy will assist the Force and the public in ensuring timely and transparent responses to all requests.

The publication strategy sets out the process as to how information relating to Operation Escudo will be proactively published and the timescales involved, which will enable the Force (when appropriate) to engage the [Section 22 provision](#) within the FOI Act. This exemption states that information which is intended for future publication does not need to be disclosed at the time - the decision to publish must have been made prior to any request for the information being received, however a fixed publication date is not required; we therefore set out below an intention to disclose the stated information prior to the deadline of **18th of November 2024**.

The identified benefits of engaging this exemption are that dealing with requests for certain data whilst the operation is ongoing can be complex and resource intensive. Furthermore, random piecemeal disclosures may in fact damage the strategic aims of the operation and affect public confidence. There will also be an appetite from the media to gain exclusive knowledge and data, via FOI, which enables them to undermine the media strategy and even potentially disrupt the operation.

Individual FOI requests will be reviewed at the point of receipt to assess if there is a clear and significant public interest in responding earlier than the planned publication deadline. Alternatively, where appropriate, the applicant will be signposted to the publication strategy and no further information will be provided at that stage, unless there is a clear public interest in doing so. This document will be reviewed and approved by Chief Officers, then revised and amended in favour of earlier disclosure, where possible.

The Public Interest Test

The Force recognises that events may change, and the balance of 'the public interest test' may well favour earlier disclosure at some point in the future. There may also be other exemptions that apply to the information in question, depending on:

- (a) the content of any request, and
- (b) the time at which it is submitted.

The below sets out our present view in relation to the public interest, both for and against disclosure.

Public interest factors favouring disclosure	Public interest factors against disclosure
<p>We are publicly funded. The Force has a duty to be accountable regarding how those public funds are used.</p>	<p>Disclosures of information under the FOIA must be specific to what has been requested by an applicant. There is no requirement under the Act to provide context, comment or opinion and there is no requirement to consider the rapidly changing nature of disclosed information. In the context of the Operation Escudo, ad hoc and premature disclosures of information via an FOIA application could be taken out of context. This may result in damage to public confidence, which could hinder our work and undermine public confidence.</p> <p>Furthermore, any data provided in response to an FOI request is data as held at the time of the request, so in a raw unaudited form. Whilst such a disclosure will meet the Force’s statutory obligation, no audit will have been conducted to ensure the accuracy and completeness of said data. It is not in the public interest to disclose inaccurate or under-reported data, nor can such data be used in a comparative manner over a longer term (whether with historic data for this Force or with other Forces).</p> <p>It is also not in the public interest to divert police resources to retrieve and audit information on a case-by-case basis that which will be prepared for publication in the normal course of events.</p>
<p>Disclosure would promote openness and transparency.</p>	<p>Whilst we will ensure our officers and staff are consulted and kept informed of decisions that are being made in relation to the police estate and job roles, we have a duty to ensure the well-being of our officers and staff. The premature disclosure of certain information into the public domain, for example that relating to operational strategies or resource allocations, would have a negative impact on staff morale and well-being, as well as operational capacity, resilience, and strengths.</p> <p>The publication of information will be prepared at some expense to the force (in terms of time); spending additional public funds (in terms of responding to individual FOI requests) would be wasteful.</p>

Overview of Publication Strategy

The list below is not exhaustive:

Category	Types of Information	Publication Strategy
Communications	Press/media releases Internal Communications	Such communications will be released on an ongoing basis – standard media strategies and considerations apply. News Merseyside Police
	Other outside agencies	Information will not be released while the operation is ongoing.
Strategy and Policy	Communication/Media Strategies Operational strategies	When the operation, including any related activity, is fully complete, consideration will be given to releasing information listed subject to any relevant exemptions under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and consulting with relevant third parties as necessary
Decision Making	Gold Group Minutes Minutes of joint strategy meetings Policing plans	
Finance	Costings, including but not limited to; The total of the addition cost to Merseyside Police i.e., not included in standard time Additional staffing hours, wages, cancelled rest days, mutual aid etc.	Merseyside Police recognise the understandable public interest regarding how much in terms of police resources, and by extension, public funds, will be spent in achieving the goals of Operation Escudo.
	Any travelling/accommodation costs Budget and overspend/under spend	Many actual costs will not be known until after the operation is complete, and all invoices/claims have been received and accounting has been completed. Please note that a figure for 'standard time' worked by all Officers/Staff engaged on Operation Escudo, will not be held by the Force and to produce this would be excessive and impracticable.

Staffing	Number and position within the organisation that worked on Operation Escudo	Merseyside Police recognise the understandable public interest as regards how much in terms of police resources will be expended in achieving the goals of Operation Escudo. Again, this figure cannot be provided until the operation is complete as numbers will change and to produce this would be excessive and impracticable; given the fast-moving nature of the operation.
Operational Activity	<p>Statistics, including but not limited to:</p> <p>The number of incidents recorded relating to Operation Escudp, the number and nature of arrests related to the event, crime statistics such as hate crime or alcohol-related crime, etc.</p>	Such information, where it has been identified and recorded by the force will be published as part of the debrief Report (see below). All disclosure to be made subject to any relevant exemptions under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and consulting with relevant third parties, as necessary.
Outcome/Review	Public facing debrief report	Matters relevant to specific policing issues and sensitive strategic matters will not appear within any publicly circulated review document until proceedings are fully complete
Professional Standards	Number of complaints, reason, outcome etc.	<p>Merseyside Police are committed to being open and accountable.</p> <p>Experience has shown that Police Forces are likely to receive complaints during such operations.</p> <p>The information is intended for future publication once any such claims have been investigated</p>