

[REDACTED]

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**From:** FOI  
**Sent:** 23 June 2023 08:51  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FOI 072-23 - Response

Dear [REDACTED],

**Our Ref: FOI-072-23**

Thank you for your email to the Electoral Commission dated 25 May 2023 and received by the Commission on 26 May 2023.

The Commission aims to respond to requests for information promptly and has done so within the statutory timeframe of twenty working days.

Your request is shown below followed by our response.

*Please would you provide copies of the actual electoral fraud/offence data provided to the Electoral Commission by Greater Manchester Police for each year 2017-2022 inclusive.*

**Our response is as follows:**

The Commission holds some information that is relevant to your request. Throughout the year, all police forces across the UK send us data about allegations of electoral fraud that they receive and investigate.

Every year we report on the number, type, and outcome of these allegations, so that you can understand what's happened and how cases are resolved. These reports for recent years are available on our website at <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/electoral-fraud-data>

The information for the specific police force and period you have requested is available in these spreadsheets published on our website:

- 2017: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Electoral%20fraud%20data%20from%20police%20forces%20from%202017%20%28XLS%29.xlsx>
- 2018: [https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/Electoral%20Fraud%202018%20cases\\_0.xlsx](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/Electoral%20Fraud%202018%20cases_0.xlsx)
- 2019: [https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/2019%20electoral%20fraud%20data%20from%20police%20forces\\_1.xlsx](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/2019%20electoral%20fraud%20data%20from%20police%20forces_1.xlsx)
- 2020: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/Electoral%20Fraud%202020%20cases.xlsx>

- 2021: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/Electoral%20Fraud%202021%20cases.xlsx>
- 2022: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/Electoral%20Fraud%20Data%202022.xlsx>

Providing you with the weblinks to this information is in line with the section 21 exemption of the Freedom of Information Act, in that the Commission does not need to repeat information that is reasonably accessible to you by other means. In this instance, the information is accessible online.

The Commission also holds some information that we will not be providing to you as it is exempt from disclosure.

We hold some informal notes on cases of alleged electoral fraud that police forces have provided to us for the purpose of informing our annual data reporting. These notes include information about details of the allegations and the investigations being carried out by the relevant police force.

The Commission is not obliged to provide information if its release would prejudice law enforcement. In this case, we are not releasing some of the requested information under Section 31(1)(b): likely to prejudice the apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

In line with the terms of this exemption in the Freedom of Information Act, we have also considered whether it would be in the public interest for us to provide you with the information, despite the exemption being applicable. In this case, we have concluded that the public interest favours withholding the information.

Section 31 is however a qualified exemption and as such the Commission is required to consider whether the public interest test is satisfied – in other words whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

When assessing whether or not it was in the public interest to disclose the information to you, we took into account the following factors:

#### **Section 31 - In favour of disclosure**

- the public would have a better understanding of how investigations are conducted
- improving the accountability and transparency of police forces investigating allegations of electoral fraud

#### **Section 31 - Against disclosure**

- causing unnecessary confusion about cases of alleged electoral fraud, i.e. these are informal notes about investigations, they are not the final outcome
- for those allegations which are unfounded, this would infringe on the Data Protection Act rights of the data subjects
- this may discourage the police and other organisations from sharing information with us in an open and transparent way

## **Public Interest Test conclusion**

We reached the view that, on balance, the public interest is better served by withholding this information under Section 31(1)(b) of the Act at this time, taking into account the points stated above. In particular, we consider that releasing the information in these informal notes would discourage police forces and other organisations from sharing information with us in an open and transparent way in future, leading to a reduction in the transparency and accountability that the electoral fraud allegations data provides overall.

I trust that this information satisfies your request. The Commission strives to be an open, transparent authority, but in some circumstances we cannot responsibly release requested information, and we ask for your understanding in this regard.

If you are not satisfied with this response, please note that the Commission operates a review procedure, details of which can be found on the Commission website at: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/freedom-information/make-a-freedom-information-request>.

Please also note that if you have exhausted all internal Commission review procedures and you are still not satisfied you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner. Details of this procedure can be found on the ICO website: <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

Information Officer

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**The Electoral Commission**

[electoralcommission.org.uk](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)