

**30 March 2020**

**Request:**

As part of an academic study into the utilisation of forensic science disciplines in casework in the UK, we are making a Freedom of Information request as follows.

Can you please indicate the number of cases per year where the following evidence types were used a) in-house (where the testing was done by police staff on police premises) or b) outsourced (where the testing was done by a forensic science provider or another external company or individual)?

Can you please provide this data for the past 5 years (2015 through to 2019) for each of the following evidence types?

1. DNA
2. Body fluids
3. Fingerprints
4. Digital forensics
5. Marks and traces
6. Toxicology
7. Drugs
8. Fibres
9. Bloodstain pattern analysis
10. Clothing/textile damage analysis
11. Firearms identification
12. Ballistics
13. Document analysis
14. Fire investigations
15. Firearms discharge residues

The purpose of this study is to identify whether the highest utilised discipline is receiving sufficient investment and support or whether a discipline that is utilised infrequently is receiving disproportionately higher support.

**Response:**

Your request for information has now been considered. Northamptonshire Police cannot supply the information you requested for the reasons set out below.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Northamptonshire Police, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt within the provisions of the Act) to provide you, the applicant, with a notice which:

In an emergency call **999**  
For non emergencies call **101**



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- a) states the fact,
- b) specifies the exemption in question and
- c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies

In relation to your particular request, the following exemption applies:

Section 12 - Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit;

Section 12(1) of the FOIA provides an exemption from a public authority's obligation to comply with a request for information where the cost of compliance is estimated to exceed the appropriate limit.

The information you are requesting in relation to forensic science examinations is not held by Northamptonshire Police in any reasonably retrievable form. The only means of establishing information of the nature you are requesting would be by way of manual examination of all Submission for Scientific Examination forms.

It is my assessment that the cost of providing you with the information requested would exceed the 'appropriate level' as set out in the Freedom of Information (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 which is currently £450 for 'prescribed costs'. It would cost 13000 (number of records for 2019) x 5 minutes each (minimum) = over 1080 hours at £25 per hour to respond to your request.

By way of explanation, we utilise Forensic services through the 5 force East Midlands Special Operations Unit (EMSOU), submitting a form with each item. These forms are saved by reference only & not by force, so the starting point would be to establish which force it relates to (e.g. Northants, Leicester, Lincs etc) and then to read each form to establish what they are asking for "Bloodstain Pattern Analysis, Toxicology, Document Analysis" etc. would be a minimum of 5 minutes per form. In 2019, there were over 13000 forms submitted; 5 years' worth of forms would be in the region of 65000 records.

In view of the above, and in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please take this letter as a Refusal Notice.

You may wish to refine and resubmit your request so that it reduces the costs shown above and is then within the 'appropriate limit' shown above. (Due to the high numbers involved, I cannot think of a means to refine the request in order to provide the information you are seeking) but if you would like some further information about how to proceed with your request then please contact [FreedomofInformation@northants.pnn.police.uk](mailto:FreedomofInformation@northants.pnn.police.uk)

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