Public Summary: Durham Constabulary FOI Refusal

On 19th August 2025, Durham Constabulary issued a response to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request concerning internal communications relating to Operation Talla and correspondence with Chief Inspector Dean Haythornthwaite. Their response is significant for public understanding and accountability.

Key Points

• Durham Constabulary invoked the 'neither confirm nor deny' provision, refusing to state whether relevant information exists.

• The Constabulary relied on exemptions relating to national security, law enforcement, and investigative functions.

• The refusal raises serious questions given the high public interest in understanding how Operation Talla influenced police actions.

• An internal review of this refusal has already been requested.

Why This Matters

The refusal to disclose or even acknowledge whether relevant information exists reinforces public concern that police forces may be concealing operational decisions that undermined public trust, transparency and constitutional safeguards. The public are entitled to clear answers about how policing decisions during the COVID-19 response were made, especially where fundamental rights were affected.

This case will now be pursued further through the FOI appeals process, ensuring that the public interest is robustly defended and accountability is sought.

The full response from Durham Constabulary is annexed below

Governance & Insights Command, Information Rights & Disclosure Unit
Durham Constabulary Headquarters
Aykley Heads
Durham
County Durham
DH1 5TT

Website: www.durham.police.uk
E-mail: foirequests@durham.police.uk

Freedom of Information Team

Reference: 1201409
Date: 19 August 2025

Police Headquarters
Aykley Heads
Durham
DH1 5TT

Dear Ian Clayton

Your Request

I am writing to formally request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 regarding internal communications within Durham Constabulary concerning engagements in correspondence between Chief Inspector [name redacted] and [name redacted].

I refer specifically to the correspondence referred to in the Analysis in PDF form which is accessible at https://ethicalapproach.co.uk/clayton_haythornthwaite_analysis.pdf and also referred to and contained within the PDF document accessible at https://ethicalapproach.co.uk/clayton_haythornthwaite_summary_and_correspondence.pdf

This analysis and summary have drawn serious concern over whether the correspondence and actions undertaken by Chief Inspector [name redacted] were influenced by the policing posture outlined in Operation Talla.

Accordingly, I request the following information:

1. All internal emails, memos, briefing notes, or communications (digital or hard copy) involving or referring to Chief Inspector [name redacted] and/or [name redacted] in relation to this correspondence or any related complaint made by [name redacted].

2. Any references within those communications to:

Operation Talla

Vaccine-related public complaints or FOI activity

NPCC/NPoCC briefings

Directives on how to handle complaints concerning Members of Parliament, Government of Parlianemtary staff and/or theor advisers etc. or any vaccine-related misconduct allegations

3. Any internal legal advice, guidance, or instruction received by Chief Inspector [name redacted] (or issued to him) in respect of how to respond to the above-mentioned correspondence.

4. Any records of internal discussions or minutes from meetings concerning whether or not to investigate [name redacted] submission or to refer him to another authority (e.g., IPSA), including the rationale for such decisions.

Contextual Reference for information:

The correspondence in question raises concern that a deliberate pattern of institutional deflection may have been at play, mirroring behaviour disclosed through recent FOI disclosures by the NPCC about Operation Talla. I ask that this request be treated with appropriate gravity in light of the high degree of public interest in relation.

If any part of this request is unclear or would benefit from refinement, I am happy to assist in narrowing the scope.

I also request that any redactions made under exemptions be clearly explained in detail and context in your response.

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Durham Constabulary can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any information relevant to this request as the duty in Section 1 (1) (a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) does not apply by virtue of the following exemptions under the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

Section 40 (5) Personal Information

DECISION

Durham Constabulary (the Force) neither confirms nor denies that it holds the personal information you have requested as the duty in Section 1(1) (a) of the FOIA (General Right of Access) does not apply by virtue of either the Section 40 (5A) & Section 40 (5B) (a) (i) FOIA (Personal Information) exemption.

This response therefore represents a Refusal Notice in accordance with Section 17(1) of FOIA; Section 17 of FOIA (Refusal of Request).

REASON FOR DECISION

A Freedom of Information request is not a private i.e., a one-to-one disclosure. Both the request itself, and any information disclosed, are considered suitable for open publication i.e., can be published on the Force's external website. This is because, under FOIA, any information disclosed is released into the wider public domain, effectively to the world at large and not just to one individual i.e., the person who made the FOI request even if their explicit permission to do so is given. Moreover, the links provided within this request do not have suitable provenance nor are a reliable source to be considered as public domain for the purpose of FOI.

To confirm or deny whether personal information exists in response to your request under FOIA, could publicly reveal information about you as an individual or about third-party individuals, thereby breaching the right to privacy afforded to ALL persons under the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

If the information requested relates to you, then you are able to request it via separate legislation i.e. via the Right of Access rights (Subject Access Rights) under the DPA. In order to make a DPA request, please complete the Force's SAR1 form which is available on our website at https://www.durham.police.uk/rqo/request/ri/request-information/ir/ask-for-delete-change-information/.. or you can collect a form from one of the named stations on the Force's website. Proof of identification will be required to process a DPA Right of Access Request, to ensure disclosure is made to the correct person. This process may also take up to one statuary month from receipt of your completed application, with proof of identification.

If you are requesting third party personal data, Durham Constabulary must ensure that it complies with the fair processing Principles outlined under section 34 of the DPA 2018 and under Article 5 of the GDPR and in the main will only release third party information to another person, via a Court Order.

CONCLUSION

This Section 17 (1) FOIA Refusal of Request Notice does not confirm or deny that Durham Constabulary holds the information that you have requested.

Please quote the reference number 1201409 in any future communications.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of receipt of the response to your original request and should be addressed to:

Information Rights & Disclosure Unit
Governance & Insights Command
Police Headquarters
Aykley Heads
Durham
DH1 5TT
Email: foirequxxxx@xxxxxx.xxlice.uk

If you are still dissatisfied with our response after the internal review you have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire

SK9 5AF
Telephone: 0330 123 1113
Website: www.ico.org.uk

I will now close your request as of this date.

Yours faithfully

Freedom of Information Team (7120)