

**2. Please can you also provide information on the level of CBRN training that members of the force would hold.**

**Clarification:**

**By 'the level of CBRN training', I mean what they are trained in is the types of CBRN training rather they have basic training or if the force have officers who can deal with anything that can come under CBRN similar to how the Met TSG (Territorial Support Group) have it.**

Applicable exemptions:

Section 24(1) - National security

Section 31(1) - Law enforcement

### **Harm**

Disclosing detailed information about the specific types of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) training that members of the force receive would have significant adverse effects on both national security and law enforcement capabilities. Revealing this information could provide malicious actors, including terrorists and other criminals, with critical insights into the force's operational strengths and vulnerabilities. Such knowledge could enable these individuals or groups to adapt their tactics to circumvent or counter police responses in CBRN-related incidents, which often involve highly sensitive and potentially catastrophic scenarios.

The nature of CBRN incidents, which may include terrorist attacks, means that the ability to respond effectively is a critical component of both national security and public safety. Any disclosure that diminishes the force's ability to respond effectively to such incidents compromises not only the immediate safety of the public but also the broader security of the nation. Additionally, such a disclosure could undermine ongoing efforts to prevent and detect crime, apprehend offenders, and protect the public from harm.

### **Public interest test**

#### **Section 24 - Arguments in favour of disclosure:**

There is a strong public interest in transparency, particularly regarding the preparedness and capabilities of the police to respond to potential CBRN incidents, which could have devastating consequences. Releasing information about the training officers receive could reassure the public that the police are adequately prepared to manage these significant threats. This could enhance public confidence in national security measures and the overall effectiveness of the force.

The public has a right to understand how well-prepared their police force is in the event of a CBRN incident, particularly given the potential severity of such incidents. Disclosing information about CBRN training could demonstrate that the force is taking appropriate steps to address these high-risk areas, thereby bolstering public confidence in counter-terrorism measures.

#### **Section 24 - Arguments against disclosure:**

The disclosure of specific details about the CBRN training provided to officers could significantly compromise national security. Such information could be exploited by individuals or groups with malicious intent, including terrorists, who could use the details to develop tactics that specifically counter the force's capabilities. This could potentially lead to more sophisticated and effective attacks, placing the safety of the public and national security at considerable risk.

Providing detailed information about the types of CBRN training could inadvertently highlight areas where the force may be less prepared, thus offering terrorists or hostile actors a strategic advantage. The risk that such information could be used to plan and execute attacks far outweighs the public interest in transparency, particularly when the potential consequences involve large-scale harm to public safety and national security.

#### **Section 31 - Arguments in favour of disclosure:**

There is a strong public interest in holding the police accountable for their preparedness in dealing with potential CBRN threats. By disclosing the details of CBRN training, the public could be assured that officers are adequately trained to manage these complex and high-risk situations. This could contribute to greater public trust in the police force's ability to protect the public from serious incidents.

Providing this information could help the public understand the complexities and challenges involved in preparing for and responding to CBRN incidents. It could also encourage public awareness of the importance of such training, thereby fostering a more informed and engaged community that is better equipped to support law enforcement efforts during emergencies.

#### **Section 31 - Arguments against disclosure:**

The release of specific details about the types of CBRN training undertaken by officers could severely undermine the operational effectiveness of the police. Criminals or terrorists could use this information to anticipate and counteract police tactics during a CBRN incident, leading to increased risk to both officers and the public. This would directly hinder the force's ability to prevent and detect crime, apprehend offenders, and protect the public.

Disclosing detailed information about CBRN training could inadvertently expose gaps or weaknesses in the force's capabilities, which could be exploited by those with malicious intent. The potential for this information to be used to compromise police responses to CBRN incidents poses a significant threat to public safety, making it imperative to withhold such details to ensure the ongoing protection of the public.

In some cases, the specific roles and functions of CBRN-trained officers are sensitive, particularly when they involve specialist units such as firearms officers. Disclosing training details could reveal or suggest the presence, or otherwise, of these specialist functions, which are often protected under a 'Neither Confirm Nor Deny' (NCND) approach. Revealing such information could compromise the strategic advantage and operational confidentiality of these units.

### **Balance test**

In weighing the public interest arguments for and against disclosure, I have considered the need for transparency and public accountability against the significant risks posed to national security and law enforcement effectiveness.

I acknowledge the public interest arguments for transparency regarding the training and preparedness of police officers, particularly in relation to CBRN incidents, which are of serious concern to public safety. However, these arguments must be weighed against the potential harm that could result from disclosing detailed information about CBRN training. The disclosure of this information could provide malicious actors, including terrorists, with critical insights that could be used to exploit perceived weaknesses in police capabilities, thereby compromising both national security and public safety. Additionally, revealing such details could undermine the operational effectiveness of law enforcement by allowing criminals to anticipate and counter police responses during CBRN incidents, thus increasing the risk of serious harm to the public.

Given the severity of the potential risks, it is my opinion that the public interest in protecting national security, maintaining the effectiveness of law enforcement operations, and ensuring public safety clearly outweighs the public interest in disclosure. The consequences of releasing this information could be catastrophic, not only jeopardising ongoing efforts to prevent and detect crime but also endangering lives. Therefore, the exemptions under Sections 24(1) and 31(1) are necessary and must be maintained.