

SP0116

Armed Policing

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[PUBLIC]**

Officers of the Police Service of Northern Ireland shall, so far as is possible, apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force including the use of firearms

1. Policy Statement

Any use of force shall be the minimum appropriate in the circumstances and shall reflect a graduated and flexible response to the threat. A police officer shall discharge a firearm only where the officer honestly believes it is absolutely necessary to do so in order to save life or prevent serious injury, unless the discharge is for training purposes or the destruction of animals.

The deployment of armed officers will at all times be carried out under rigorous and accredited standards of training, authorisation and robust operational, tactical and strategic command. This is achieved in accordance with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Manual on Conflict Management, College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice on Armed Policing, and PSNI Code of Ethics.

The PSNI will make available to trained officers, weapon systems and less lethal weapons and munitions for which stringent standards of competence in their command, deployment and use exist.

PSNI weapon systems, both lethal and less lethal, are subject to standing authorities. In recognition of the special circumstances prevailing in Northern Ireland, the Chief Constable has given standing authority for

all officers, subject to successful training, to be issued with a personal issue handgun which may be carried when officers are both on and off duty. Standing authorities are kept under regular review in accordance with Recommendation 65 of the Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland.

Any operational use of firearms and less lethal weapons will be subject to independent investigation and oversight.

2. Policy Links

The Corporate Policy Framework refers.

3. Contact

If you have any comment to make on the content of this Service Policy please contact OTDU@psni.police.uk