



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2021-01052

**Keyword:** Operational Policing

**Subject:** Police Dogs in Public Order Situations

### Request and Answer:

Your request for information has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1) (a) of the Act we can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold information to which your request relates. The decision has been taken to disclose the following.

#### Request 1

Does the PSNI have a General Risk Assessment (PSNIGRA) for the deployment of Police Dogs in Public Order Situations and if so, can it be available for public inspection?

#### Answer

The PSNI does not have a general or specific risk assessment for the deployment of Police Dogs in Public Order Situations. However to assist, relevant information is contained within the following live documents:

'Use of Police Dogs in Public Order' is contained within the 'Police Dogs Manual of Guidance' and 'PSNI Public Order Tactics Manual'. These documents are publically available online.

#### Request 2

If the PSNI has such a document:

- Is it current?
- What dates is it effective from and to?
- And has it been 'signed off' by a Senior Rank and viewed/reviewed by the Police Federation for Northern Ireland, as counter signatory?

#### Answer

Not applicable, as the PSNI does not have a general or specific risk assessment for the deployment of Police Dogs in Public Order Situations.

#### Request 3

What Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is the PSNI making available for Public Service dogs, deployed in Public Order situations?

**Answer**

The only PPE currently on issue for dogs involved in Public Order duty is the Ruffwear Vibram soled boots. These are solely to protect the dog's pads from cuts and abrasions where glass may be present. Importantly, the dog handler will always complete a dynamic risk assessment before any deployment.

**Request 4**

PSNI Comm Sec Correspondence 5029-21 refers. It is stated that PSNI "experimented" with "some equipment" in the past, this is not "fit for purpose".

- What documentation is available?
- What equipment was trialled?
- And finally what correspondence / reports is available documenting this "experimentation"?

**Answer**

Some equipment has previously been examined on an informal and ad hoc basis. As part of environmental scanning a harness which supposedly offered some ballistic and blunt force trauma protection was looked at. However, this was quickly deemed unsuitable following consultation with The Dog Training Unit (DTU) and the Service vet. The main reasons for this were in relation to its weight which could cause early fatigue in the dogs and also the likelihood of joint and possible spinal damage from impacts on the ground when the harness was worn. Due to these factors there was no further evaluation of this item.

New equipment is assessed via the Uniform and Protective Measures Committee to assure accountability for future potential purchases, however there are no records of other items of equipment being formally produced, evaluated or experimented with by DTU or by Dog Handlers.

**Request 5**

If previous "experiments" didn't work, what measures is PSNI now taking to prevent death / injury to Public Order deployed dogs, specifically Foot (pad) protection against glass shards and bodily strikes by thrown rubble, bricks and masonry?

**Answer**

Please see above our answer to request three.

**Request 6**

Is there any current documentation available circulating within PSNI that specifically addresses the issue of PPE for Service dogs and if so can disclosure be made of all relevant associated media?

**Answer**

As mentioned in response to request 4, an internal memo was produced by a handler outlining the unsuitability of an item which had been brought to their attention by another dog handler. No formal organisational assessments have been put in place for PO Dog PPE.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact me on 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Corporate Information Branch, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this letter.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Corporate Information Branch, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by

emailing [foi@psni.pnn.police.uk](mailto:foi@psni.pnn.police.uk).

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ [www.psni.police.uk](http://www.psni.police.uk)

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.