



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2021-02742

**Keyword:** Organisational Information/Governance

**Subject:** PSNI Uniform Policy

### 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

A copy of the current service procedure in respect of the wearing of a poppy during the period of remembrance.

#### Answer 1

Please see below a copy of the relevant sections from the PSNI's Corporate Appearance and Protective Equipment Standard (Capes) which responds to your request.

#### **1.6 Corporate Appearance and Protective Equipment Standard (Capes)**

*Police officers and police staff, whether in uniform or plain clothes, will not wear any badges or emblems save those permitted in this document or otherwise authorised by the Chief Constable. One moderate plain poppy or small poppy ornament may be worn voluntarily and in a respectful manner on Remembrance Sunday and from the period of the launch of the Poppy Appeal by the Royal British Legion until Remembrance Sunday, or Armistice day, whichever is later. The poppy or poppy ornament must not show or suggest any affiliation with any existing or past organisation, and can be worn in a respectful manner anywhere on the officers uniform (save for the tie as defined in CAPES section 2.6).*

*The poppy may also be worn at other memorial events (for example in remembrance of the death of a police officer), which take place in local stations or elsewhere and fall outside this period. A small sprig of shamrock may be worn in a similarly respectful manner, only on the 17th March, St Patrick's Day.*

#### **CAPES 2.6**

*Any police officer wearing a long sleeved or short sleeved white shirt must always wear a tie. The tie will be black in colour and will be of the 'clip on' variety due to Health and Safety requirements. The clip is non-allergenic. Ties are available in short and long lengths and must not be removed when an officer is in view of the public and must always be worn in such a way as to present a professional image of the service. Tie pins and badges must not be worn.*

## **Request 2**

A copy of the current service procedure in respect of officers wearing of uniform. Covering the uniformity of dress, wearing of forage caps, ties. Also including the standards of appearance of officers in respect of but not exclusively wearing of jewellery, hair appearance, tattoos.

## **Answer 2**

Please see below a copy of the relevant sections from the PSNI's Corporate Appearance and Protective Equipment Standard (Capes) which responds to your request.

*Each of us, whatever our role, are accountable for the image portrayed by the Police Service of Northern Ireland. How we look, engage and behave should portray professionalism and reinforce the behaviours of fairness, courtesy and respect to both the public and our colleagues. High standards of individual personal appearance are important and the Corporate Appearance and Protective Equipment Standard provide clear directions as to our organisational expectations.*

*Supervisors will ensure that these directions are complied with, particularly when police officers or police staff, whether in uniform or non-uniform roles, are engaging directly with members of the public, customers, clients or stakeholders of the PSNI.*

*The PSNI promotes a good and harmonious working environment and as such, no items of clothing or other adornments should be worn which may reasonably be perceived as inappropriate, intimidating, offensive and/or oppressive by an individual or group of individuals.*

*Chewing gum or smoking, including the use of electronic cigarettes, while in public view is prohibited.*

### **CAPES 1.1 Personal Hygiene**

*Police officers and police staff must be clean, tidy and look professional at all times (consistent with the duty being performed). Standards of personal hygiene should be appropriate to working in a close environment with others and with due consideration for those with whom they come into contact – this includes both colleagues and members of the public.*

### **CAPES 1.2 Hair**

*Hair should at all times be clean, neat and tidy. In the interests of health and safety, hair should be worn so that it is cut or secured above the collar (unless there are religious<sup>1</sup>, cultural<sup>1</sup> or medical reasons<sup>2</sup>). Extreme hairstyles, colour, patterns and motifs may detract from the professional image of PSNI and are not permitted.*

### **CAPES 1.3 Facial Hair**

*An 'unshaven' appearance is not desirable for public facing roles, and therefore beards and moustaches should be established whilst off duty or at a time when police officers or police staff are performing duties where there will be no contact with the public. Beards/moustaches should be kept neatly trimmed, although exceptions to this are made for practicing members of a religion which specifically forbids this. Where any individual's facial appearance changes as a result of growing or removing a beard/moustache then a new Identification Card must be obtained. Costs of new photographs in such instances will be borne by the individual.*

*Some police officers/police staff occupy roles where there is a routine possibility of respiratory exposure to occupational hazards [Click Here](#). These officers/staff members may be required to wear Respiratory Protection Equipment (RPE) at short notice and must therefore always remain clean shaven in the area of the seal whilst on duty.*

*Any Police Officer or member of Police Staff who require facial hair for religious<sup>1</sup> or medical<sup>2</sup> reasons may apply to be considered for alternative RPE.*

*Officers and Staff within these roles must receive training in relation to the wearing of RPE [Click here](#) and must be portacounted/face fit tested as soon as practicable on commencing their role. Officers*

who are issued with personal RPE must be retested annually unless exceptional circumstances apply<sup>3</sup>. They have a personal responsibility to ensure compliance with this requirement.

#### **CAPES 1.4 Cosmetics**

Make up may be worn in moderation and should be of a colour and type that is appropriate to the work environment, i.e. not obtrusive or excessive. Make up, worn in moderation, should not detract from a professional image.

Nails must be kept to a length that will not interfere with duties and police officers may only wear clear nail polish.

#### **CAPES 1.5 Jewellery**

The wearing of jewellery whilst on duty could, in certain circumstances, present an unnecessary risk of injury to police officers, police staff and members of the public.

The only items of jewellery that a police officer or member of police staff are permitted to have visible whilst on public facing duties are a wristwatch, wedding ring, engagement ring, civil or other partnership ring and signet ring. Rings with prominent stones or settings should not be worn on duty due to the risk of injury they present both to the wearer and to others with whom the individual comes into contact. The Police Service does not accept any liability for the damage or loss of these items.

No items of jewellery may be worn through the nose, eyebrows, lips, ears, tongue or any other visible part of the body by police officers or police staff when engaged with the public during their tour of duty. Exceptions may be made in relation to specialist operations.

When engaging with the public, police officers and police staff will not wear neck chains where they could be visible. Neck chains may be worn under the uniform provided they are not visible or obtrusive, and do not conflict with any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provided.

Body piercing material or jewellery may be caught, detached or struck and impaled into the body causing injury. There are also other associated dangers. Police officers and police staff having body piercings that are not visible when clothed should be aware of the associated risk of injury.

Where religious or cultural requirements necessitate the wearing of a specific piece of jewellery this will be permitted where there is no significant risk to health and safety. Any item worn should be as unobtrusive as possible.

Whilst in uniform, police officers should not wear cufflinks. Whilst on duty or otherwise at work, the wearing of charity wristbands, friendship bracelets, bangles or any other similar items is not permitted by police officers or police staff. An SOS medical bracelet may be worn.

#### **CAPES 1.6 ID Passes, Lanyards, Other Ornaments and Emblems**

All police officers and police staff in plain clothes must wear their ID pass at all times when on police premises. The only lanyards for ID passes to be worn around the neck are those:

- Issued to those who have Developed Vetting (DV) status or are undergoing DV assessment.
- Issued by PSNI procurement and approved by the Uniform and Protective Measures Committee.
- Approved by a line manager and compliant with guidelines on equality, neutrality, professionalism and corporate image.

Police officers and police staff, whether in uniform or plain clothes, will not wear any badges or emblems save those permitted in this document or otherwise authorised by the Chief Constable. One moderate plain poppy or small poppy ornament may be worn voluntarily and in a respectful manner on Remembrance Sunday and from the period of the launch of the Poppy Appeal by the Royal British Legion until Remembrance Sunday, or Armistice day, whichever is later. The poppy or poppy ornament must not show or suggest any affiliation with any existing or past organisation, and can be worn in a respectful manner anywhere on the officers uniform (save for the tie as defined in CAPES section 2.6).

The poppy may also be worn at other memorial events (for example in remembrance of the death of a police officer), which take place in local stations or elsewhere and fall outside this period. A small sprig of shamrock may be worn in a similarly respectful manner, only on the 17th March, St Patrick's Day.

## **CAPES 1.7 Tattoos**

*The Police Service of Northern Ireland strives to be representative of all the community it serves regardless of religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, gender, disability, dependencies or sexual orientation.*

*Furthermore, to deliver a service that meets the needs of the community, the Police Service of Northern Ireland must be cognisant of not only who we serve, but also the societal context and the fluid nature of our progressive society. Only in taking this approach can we be an inclusive and diverse organisation, truly representative of society.*

*We recognise that having a tattoo does not necessarily prevent you from serving in the Police Service of Northern Ireland. However, certain tattoos and their visibility may not be acceptable. All officers are required to adhere with the Corporate Appearance and Protective Equipment Standard. Therefore careful consideration will be given by the organisation to any tattoos on the head, face, neck and hands or tattoos which cannot be covered by uniform.*

*This includes the size, nature and prominence of the tattoos in question.*

- 1. Tattoos will be unacceptable if they are contrary to any of the equality areas identified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998\* or are in contravention of the PSNI good and harmonious working environment.*
- 2. Whether visible or not, tattoos will be unacceptable where they could reasonably be interpreted as offensive to members of the public or colleagues due to their content or alignment with a particular group.*
- 3. The Police Service of Northern Ireland regularly engages with some of the most vulnerable members of society. Therefore, tattoos which conceal the identity of an officer to the extent where it would potentially inhibit their ability as a police officer to undertake their duties or which may make a member of the public feel uncomfortable, intimidated or threatened will be unacceptable.*

*All serving officers who are considering having a tattoo must ensure that they comply with this guidance.*

*\*In carrying out its functions PSNI have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity in respect of Section 75 and persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependents and persons without.*

## **CAPES 1.8 Sunglasses**

*Police drivers may wear their own sunglasses in conditions of bright sunlight. Frames should be plain and in keeping with the colour of the main uniform.*

*Styles which could detract from a professional image are not allowed. Lenses must not be mirrored, photo chromatic or too dark and should be made of a suitable material to minimise the risk of serious injury in the event of an accident. With the exception of prescription lenses, sunglasses should be removed when speaking to or dealing with a member of the public. Police cyclists will remove shaded eye protection when speaking to or dealing with members of the public.*

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 remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, 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', or use the ICO self-service portal available at [www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/officialinformation-concerns-report/official-information-concern/](http://www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/officialinformation-concerns-report/official-information-concern/)

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 their discretion.

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

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