

Consultation Questionnaire



The Use of Spit and Bite Guards by the Police Service of Northern Ireland Equality Impact Assessment

RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is seeking your views on the use of Spit and Bite Guards.

Please read the document “The Use of Spit and Bite Guards by the Police Service of Northern Ireland Equality Impact Assessment” and provide your responses to the questions below. Please send your response **by 5pm on Friday 21st May 2021** to:

Address: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Human Resources
Lisnasharragh PSNI
42 Montgomery Road
Belfast
BT6 9HL

Telephone: 02890 922000

E mail: zOTDU@psni.police.uk

Confidentiality and Access to Information Legislation

The PSNI intends to publish responses to the consultation and a summary response report on **our website**. **Any contact details or information that will identify a respondent as a private individual** will be removed prior to publication. All information will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Your information will not be shared outside of the PSNI.

What rights do you have?

- You have the right to obtain confirmation that your data is being processed and access to your personal data;
- You are entitled to have personal data rectified if it is inaccurate or incomplete;
- You have a right to have personal data erased and to prevent processing, in specific circumstances;
- You have the right to 'block' or suppress processing of personal data, in specific circumstances;
- You have the right to data portability, in specific circumstances;
- You have the right in relation to automated decision making and profiling.

Respondents should also be aware that the PSNI's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) may require that any responses not subject to specific exemptions under the Act be communicated to third parties on request.

If you have any queries in relation to how PSNI handle personal data or comply with data protection legislation please contact **PSNI Data Protection**:

Tel No: 02890700164

Email: DataProtection@psni.police.uk

If you have any concerns about confidentiality of responses please contact the **Information Commissioner's Office**.

Northern Ireland Information Commissioner's Office

**3rd Floor,
14 Cromac Place,
Belfast
BT7 2JB**

Tel: 0303 123 1113

E Mail: ni@ico.org.uk

Website: www.ico.org.uk

Thank you for completing this questionnaire and providing input to this consultation.

SECTION 1: ABOUT YOU

Consultee Details

Question (a):

I am responding as... (Please tick one option only)

- A member of the Public
- On behalf of an Organisation
- Other (Please specify)

Question (b):

In some cases, the PSNI might need to contact respondents to seek further clarification on their response or to send out a summary of responses to the consultation.

Please tick the below consent box if you are willing to provide the PSNI with contact details for these purposes:

All information will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Name:

Job title: *(if applicable)*

Organisation: *(if applicable)*

Address:

City/Town:

Postcode:

Email Address:

SECTION 2: QUESTIONNAIRE

This consultation seeks views on The Police Service of Northern Ireland's (PSNI) use of Spit & Bite Guards. Spit and Bite Guards are a piece of work equipment used to protect officers, staff, and members of the public from assaults by spitting and biting. Spit and Bite Guards were introduced in March 2020 as a temporary tactical option to counter such assaults for the duration of the Coronavirus pandemic. We would welcome your thoughts on the use of Spit and Bite Guards as a tactical option in a post Coronavirus environment.

A Spit and Bite Guard is a breathable, mesh material garment that covers the face and head to prevent the wearer from being able to assault officers, staff and members of the public by means of spitting, thereby reducing the potential of communicable/contagious diseases. PSNI policy on the Use of Spit and Bite Guards is contained in Chapter 16 of the PSNI Conflict Management Manual. The product the PSNI use is the Spit Guard Pro (shown below).



Question 1.

The protection of police staff and the public from persons spitting and biting is paramount as it poses a real risk of injury to those subject to this act from blood borne viruses (and potentially Coronavirus). Research also shows a risk of victims suffering an acute stress reaction and other psychological factors from this assault.

Do you agree with the use of Spit and Bite Guards as a tactical option?

Yes

No (*please tick*)

Please add comments below:

Question 2.

In the interests of transparency and accountability PSNI provide a daily report to the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI) notifying them of all uses of Spit and Bite Guards as well as notifying the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) of all uses on a regular basis.

Do you believe there are other measures PSNI should adopt to enhance accountability of the use of Spit & Bite Guards?

Yes

No (*please tick*)

Please add comments below:

Question 3.

In the absence of Spit & Bite Guards, Police may be required to use physical restraint in dealing with people who are spitting or biting. This could increase the likelihood of the subject sustaining injuries.

Do you agree that Spit and Bite Guards are a lesser use of force than physical restraint?

Yes

No (*please tick*)

Please add comments below:

Question 4.

PSNI policy in respect of Spit and Bite Guards dictates that officers/staff should use alternative tactics to Spit and Bite Guards where possible, to aide de-escalation with the subject. This may include good communication, wearing additional personal protective equipment or placing the subject in a cell van and keeping under observation.

Do you have any suggestions on alternative tactical solutions to deal with persons spitting and/or biting?

Yes

No (*please tick*)

Please add comments below:

Question 5.

PSNI policy states that where officers or staff are aware that a member of the public is under 18 the presumption will be that a Spit and Bite Guard should not be used.

It further states that special consideration should be given to the heightened vulnerabilities of children and reminds officers that Article 3 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) requires the best interests of children to be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.

What are your views on PSNI's policy on the use of Spit and Bite Guards on children?

Please add comments below:

Question 6.

PSNI policy states that where officers or staff are already aware that a member of the public is vulnerable, for example due to mental health, the presumption will be that a Spit and Bite Guard should not be used.

Do you agree with this policy?

Yes

No (*please tick*)

Please add comments below:

Question 7.

The Coronavirus pandemic expedited the temporary introduction of Spit & Bite Guards. PSNI recommends that there is now a sufficient evidence base to justify the permanent use of Spit & Bite Guards.

Do you agree that PSNI should introduce Spit and Bite Guards as a tactical option in a post Coronavirus environment?

Yes

No (*please tick*)

Please add comments below:

Question 8.

PSNI's policy on the Use of Spit and Bite Guards is attached at Appendix G of the EQIA document.

Do you have any comment to make on the content of the policy?

Yes

No (*please tick*)

Please add comments below:

Question 9.

PSNI recommends the enhanced roll out of 'Adverse Childhood Experiences' (ACE) training to ensure all officers are able to recognise vulnerable persons who have experienced past trauma and signpost them to appropriate aftercare following the application of a Spit & Bite Guard.

Do you believe training in 'ACE' would assist in aftercare? Can you suggest any other ways officers could assist vulnerable people who have had a Spit and Bite Guard applied?

Yes

No (*please tick*)

Please add comments below:

Question 10.

Do you believe that the use of Spit and Bite Guards adversely affects any of the 9 protected groups listed below disproportionately?

1. Religious Belief
2. Racial / Ethnic Group
3. Political Opinion
4. Age
5. Gender
6. Marital Status
7. Sexual Orientation
8. Disability
9. Dependents

Yes

No *(please tick)*

Please add comments below: