



Uniform & Equipment Policy

2022
Version 4

PFEW Policy Document

UNIFORM & EQUIPMENT POLICY

Version 4

Policy Principles and Rationale

The Police Federation of England and Wales has always taken the leading role in officer safety. Officers should be safe in the knowledge that all has been done to protect their safety; this means providing appropriate, reliable equipment and sufficient back-up officers (including Authorised Firearms Officers) should they be required. This requires Chief Constables, the Commissioner and PCCs budgeting for continual investment in uniform and equipment, year-on-year.

Background

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 forces have the legal responsibility, as the employer, for the health, safety and welfare of their officers and staff. This includes the provision of adequate training and equipment to, so far as reasonably practicable, protect them from the hazards of the tasks they take on.

PFEW believes that all officers need proper and comprehensive officer safety training and regular refresher courses. This training should be sufficient to prepare officers for the risks they may face and consider the needs of different people. All equipment used within the training environment is expected to be maintained to the highest standards, and suitable for purpose.

Under Reg 4 of Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 (PPER), every employer shall ensure that suitable personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided to their workers who may be exposed to risk. PFEW are aware Reg 4(1A) states, where the characteristics of any policing activity are such that complying with this obligation would conflict with the exercise of that activity or with an officer's performance, then the obligation to provide PPE has only to be complied with so far as is reasonably practicable. We will work with chief officers to ensure where this happens appropriate control measures are in place to maintain safety.

Chief Constables, the Commissioner and PCCs will need to budget for continual investment in all PPE, including body armour. It should not come as a shock. Investing in safety should be part of a force's on-going budget, year on year. Since personal safety is officers' number one priority, having or not having access to effective body armour and fit for purpose PPE could well be the difference between them feeling confident to go out on the streets or not.

PFEW considers that the Police Service has a duty to ensure officers are issued with the best possible equipment for their physical protection. This includes effective batons to combat assailants, ballistic and knife resistant vests suitable for operational and covert wear, and incapacitant sprays and Controlled Energy Devices to enable officers to immobilise violent people. PFEW believes that, at present police forces are effectively waiting for incidents to occur before they make the investment. The most valuable policing resources, the officers themselves, must receive the very best protection available.

In an area in which technology moves quickly, we must move with the times. Technological developments will continue, thereby making the PPE of the future even safer and more comfortable than those currently available. PFEW will remind chief constables of Reg 6 of PPER which, at 6(3) provides that, where an employer is considering the suitability of PPE - that they also ensure such assessment is reviewed if:

- There is reason to suspect that it is no longer valid, or
- There has been a significant change in the matters to which it relates.

Regulation 7 of PPER states employers shall ensure PPE is maintained in an efficient state and in good repair and provide (free of charge) replacements for any damaged equipment. It also states regular inspections, by trained staff, should be introduced to ensure the effectiveness of the PPE. Forces should therefore budget for a regular review, replacement, and assessment programme, with the financial considerations at the bottom of the list of priorities, and officer safety at the very top.

With the dwindling number of police stations the PFEW reminds forces of their obligations under Regulation 8 of PPER to ensure appropriate storage is provided for PPE such as body armour to protect it from damage, contamination, and loss. Forces are also reminded of their obligations to provide suitable policies and procedures to clean and decontaminate PPE if it becomes contaminated during use. There is also an obligation under Reg 4(4) which requires the employer to ensure that, where it is necessary to ensure that PPE is hygienic and free of risk to health, that such PPE is provided to a person for their use only.

PFEW supports the wearing of body worn video devices for operational police officers. This must be accompanied by proper guidelines and training to ensure the best evidence gathering. PFEW believes that the cameras will demonstrate the professionalism of officers and show the challenges faced by colleagues daily. They will also help protect officers in terms of malicious and vexatious complaints.

PFEW believes it is essential for police officers to have the right technology to do the job.

PFEW believes forces are obligated to provide uniform and PPE which fits the different shapes of their workforce. This statement is supported by Reg 4(3) provides that PPE shall not be considered 'suitable' unless:

- It takes account of ergonomic requirements and the state of health of the person wearing it;
- It is capable of fitting the wearer correctly, if necessary after adjustments have been made.

Uniform and PPE must enable all officers to work comfortably and effectively, throughout the year, with consideration of extremes of temperature. One size does not fit all. Forces must provide a uniform that is professional, smart, and crucially fit for purpose. If there is need to alter clothing to achieve a better fit PFEW believes the cost of doing so should be met by the force. For clarity, where this is PPE clothing, the cost would have to be met by the employer to ensure that the PPE was suitable and effective to adequately control the risk.

PFEW supports the supply of specially designed maternity uniform for pregnant officers and encourages all forces to engage with pregnant officers to ensure their comfort is considered. Forces must also consider the implications a standard uniform and PPE may have for some religions and officers with disabilities and work with individual officers and PFEW representatives to ensure these concerns are listened to whilst maintaining the safety of all. PFEW recognises the importance of carrying out Equality Impact Assessments when introducing uniform and equipment and will push for these to be carried out in every instance.

PFEW believes that a national uniform or standardised mode of dress would undoubtedly enhance the professional image of the Police Service, maximise visibility and in turn increase public confidence in the service provided. Although, PPER does not cover general uniform items the PFEW encourages forces to ensure they budget for replacement for worn or damaged uniform (free of charge) to officers.

It is recognised by PFEW, that boots / footwear for general police duties police are not designated under PPER. However, we believe having a standardised supply of these items will promote uniformity and more importantly offer better protection to officers. We will push forces to provide appropriate footwear free of charge to all officers who require it.

It is essential that any piece of uniform designed to keep officers warm, dry, and visible meets with the highest standards especially for garments used to maintain visibility on the highway, these types of items would be covered under PPER. Any high visibility clothing must meet rigorously tested standards and appropriate guidance must be given to officers to ensure they are complying with directions of use. The provision of information, instruction, and training to ensure that a worker

understands the risks which the PPE is intended to avoid and how the PPE is to be used etc... is required under Reg 9

PFEW believes any piece of uniform or equipment needs to be provided through an ethical supply chain which upholds social and human rights and environmental principles.

Policy Statement

PFEW will:

- Continue to press for making the wearing of appropriate protective vests mandatory for operational policing.
- Push for forces to implement procedures to carry out mandatory annual refit and inspections of protective vests.
- Work with forces to ensure they consider the most efficient and effective PPE for officers in order to maintain their safety.
- Work with forces to ensure officers receive regular information and training on the most appropriate use of PPE and how to maintain their safety.
- Work with National Police Chiefs Council and the College of Policing to ensure that there is a joined-up approach with body worn video devices to avoid problems with interoperability.
- Continue to press the College of Policing and the NPCC to consider a national uniform or a standardised mode of dress that would undoubtedly enhance the professional image of the service, maximise visibility and in turn increase public confidence.
- To push the NPCC to recommend forces provide appropriate footwear and uniform alterations, free of charge.
- Continue to press the College of Policing and the NPCC to understand the diverse needs of their workforce and encourage them to engage with PFEW to consider the specific uniform and PPE requirements of all officers.
- Work with forces to ensure the uniform and equipment is provided by ethical suppliers and it is of the highest standard to keep officers looking professional but more importantly warm, dry, and seen. PFEW understands maintaining fiscal prudence is essential for forces, but this should not be to the detriment of officer health, safety and welfare.

Supporting Evidence

This section details some key results from the PFEW 2018 Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey in relation to **access to equipment (protection)**. Key findings are as follows:

- **78.5%** of respondents reported that they *always* have access to a *baton* whilst they are on duty, making it by far the most readily available form of personal protective equipment/measure, followed by *incapacitant spray* (**76.9%**)
- Whilst **52.2%** of respondents want to have access to *double-crewing at all times* whilst they are on duty, only **8.2%** actually report this to be the case.
- Perhaps unsurprisingly then, **75.7%** of respondents (who reported that single-crewing was applicable to their role) reported that they *want more access to double-crewing than they currently have*.
- Although **57.6%** of respondents *want to have access to Taser at all times* whilst they are on duty, only **16.4%** actually report this to be the case.
- **65.1%** of respondents (who reported that Taser was applicable to their role) reported that they *want more access to Taser than they currently have*.
- Finally, **62.6%** of respondents *want to have access to spit guards at all times* whilst they are on duty, with less than half of this proportion (**28.6%**) actually reporting that this is the case.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all police officers.

Key Stakeholders

- The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)
- The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC)
- Home Office, UK Government
- PFEW Membership
- Local Branch Chairs and Secretaries
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Service (HMICFRS)
- College of Policing
- Chief Police Officers' Staff Association (CPOSA)

This is not an exhaustive list

Policy Review

Recommend to review after the 12 month period.

Policy Document – Versions

Version 4	Drafted by PFEW Business Area Health and Safety Lead	Policy Approved on: 17 th Aug 2022	Policy to be revised in: 16 th Aug 2023
-----------	--	--	--

Approved by National Board on 17th Aug 2022