

Pregnant officers want alternative clothing

More than three quarters of police officers think pregnant officers should be allowed to wear an alternative to their uniform during pregnancy, according to an on-line survey by the Police Federation.

Around 80 percent of the 400 mostly female officers who responded to the survey said that women should be able to wear their own clothes or an alternative to the police uniform to ensure they are comfortable during their pregnancy.

More than half, 54.8 percent stated they did not have a maternity uniform and nearly a third, 28.5 percent did not know if their force provided one.

Julie Nesbit, the Federation's national policewomen's representative for constables, said: "It is left to the individual but uniform should be part of the risk assessment carried out when a woman informs the force she is pregnant.

"Having been a uniformed police officer and been pregnant twice during that time, I was delighted that my force allowed me to wear my own clothes. It's important that women can feel comfortable during this time and police uniforms can not only be restrictive but the material used can make you feel hot or too cold and uncomfortable."

Nearly half, 46.5 percent of those who responded were in the 26 to 33 age group and 50.1 percent had already taken maternity leave.

Around half of those who responded, 51.6 percent, thought the current maternity wear was not fit for purpose and 55.1 percent felt they would prefer to wear a more flexible top during pregnancy.

One respondent said: "The police is a uniformed service and it still hasn't got its head round the fact that it employs women. They still haven't got equality in a simple area of business such as uniform."

Federation call for basic officer safety training

The Police Federation has expressed grave concerns that a benchmark has not been set for officer safety training at a time when recent figures show a rise in the number of assaults on police officers.

A report by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, *Safety Matters*, published in April, outlined some of the Federation concerns about the lack of consistency and standards in officer safety training, which teaches officers how to protect themselves and use personal equipment.

Although the report recommends minimum hours are set for safety training, it also suggests that different roles could require different levels of training.

George Appleby, chairman of the operational policing sub-committee, said that this would present a risk if officers seen to be working behind a desk are not given basic skills.

"Our concern is that a minimum number of hours of safety training should be set for each officer. Even if an officer is away from frontline duties they could be called upon to help their colleagues. They should be ready and trained to assist them and properly protect each other."

Paul Davis, secretary of the sub-committee, said: "How do you deal with an incident like 7/7 or disorder in an area of a town? If an officer only has two hours training you remove the ability to be able to send them out to help their colleagues."

Tory MP Grant Shapps published tables on the number of assaults on police officers last month which revealed an increase of more than 1,000 in three years. In 2006 alone there was an average of 64 assaults on police officers per day, one every 22 minutes.

The HMIC report, also recommended that ACPO undertake a review of the minimum hours required for officer safety to set a mandatory requirement for all forces to comply.

Female officers want comfortable alternative to standard uniform

Basic safety training is essential

