

Uniform and appointments

PCSOs should be recognisable to the public as police staff but visibly distinct from regular police officers.

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Recognisable to the public as police staff

Police community support officers (PCSOs) should be recognisable to the public as police staff but visibly distinct from regular police officers. This is to ensure they are separated from police officers so they are not confused by the public. It has been clearly expressed by UNISON PCSO members that there should be no difference in the style and design of the force crest on their headgear/uniform to that of warranted police officers in the same force. It is our understanding that most forces outside the Metropolitan Police Service already provide the same force crest to PCSOs as are provided on police constable uniforms. However, if the handbook were able to address any deficit in this regard, our members would be very grateful.

Badges

Providing PCSOs with a badge that is not the force crest does not accord these staff the same respect as police officers.

The Home Office preference is that PCSOs look similar across the country.

Headgear

Forces should also note that there are special safety considerations about headgear (for example, level of head protection) and reflective wear (for example, European standard EN471). A rigorous health and safety risk assessment should identify the safety standards which apply. Forces should also be able to respond to any national changes in relation to head protection as they emerge.

Additional badging

The issue of additional badging, for example, to reflect that a PCSO has been provided via a local source of funding such as a local authority should be avoided. This has the potential to lead to

confusion with local authority funded wardens so is not recommended as good practice. This position should be outlined to any partner agency prior to the start of any partnership agreement.

Personal protective equipment

Appointments need to be considered regarding the type of duties envisaged. PCSOs will need access to:

- communication (airwave terminal or mobile phones in rural areas with poor coverage)
- a means of recording evidence in respect of offences they deal with or witness (a pocket notebook, incident or offence booklet or equivalent)
- equipment for their protection in accordance with health and safety risk assessments

Each force will need to consider what level of personal protective equipment (PPE) will be appropriate to its PCSOs. Passive protective equipment, such as body armour, has become commonplace and forces should consider issue of this equipment considering local health and safety assessments.

Body-worn cameras

Body-worn cameras should be made available to PCSOs wherever possible.

Incapacitant spray and baton

The current assessment of the PCSO role indicates there is no requirement for the issue of incapacitant spray and baton. Where the power to detain has been conferred, appropriate PPE should be available to meet their safety needs and in accordance with the outcomes of a thorough risk assessment. For further information on legislation surrounding the issue of PPE, please refer to the [legislation and powers sections of this handbook](#).

Training requirements associated with PPE

There are considerable officer safety training requirements associated with the issuing and use of PPE. Forces will need to commit resources to both initial and regular refresher training. Training is, however, essential and forces must demonstrate adequate levels of competence in the event of any subsequent complaint, challenge or litigation.

Forces must clearly define the role and powers of their PCSOs prior to making decisions about PPE.

Tags

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