

Police Identification in Northern Ireland



A Report under Section 60A
of the Police (NI) Act 1998

March 2006

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Foreword by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland



For many years people have talked about their inability to identify Police Officers both when they wish to compliment them on work well done, and also when they want to complain about some incident that has occurred. As an Office we have encountered occasions when it has been very difficult to identify individual police vehicles. The police are now very much committed to policing with the community and co-operated with us in the work now being published. What we have tried to do here is to examine the whole issue of police identification, to gauge public and police views on the matter, and to make sensible suggestions, which are designed to facilitate better officer and equipment identification. These are very important issues. The ability to identify is critical to proper communication. Communication is essential to trust. We hope that this Report will make a small contribution to enabling better relationships between the police and those whom they serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nuala O'Loan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nuala O'Loan
Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the investigative research project conducted by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland during 2004/05 into issues surrounding police identification.

The investigative research comprised 5 elements:

- a consultation survey of the views of the public on the current methods of identification within the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI);
- a consultation survey of the views of the police on the current methods of identification within the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI);
- a semi-structured focus group with interested parties;
- in-depth interviews with consultees; and
- a benchmarking exercise on the methods of police identification used by a sample of police services throughout the UK.

Public Consultation Survey

Of the 561 participants who were contacted 149 (27 per cent) responded. Seven anonymous responses were recorded from the website.

The majority of respondents (83 per cent) indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer uniform identification. Three general themes ran throughout respondents' comments: location and size of the epaulette numbers; the visibility and obscurity of the epaulette numbers; and the wearing of name badges in conjunction with epaulette numbers.

Over three quarters (76 per cent) of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer identification on equipment. Four themes emerged: lack of knowledge regarding identification on equipment; size, location and obscurity of identification on equipment; that all equipment should have individual officer identification; and the wearing of name badges instead of numbers.

Over three-quarters (76 per cent) of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer identification by means of a warrant card. Four general areas of concern ran throughout respondents' comments: lack of knowledge regarding warrant cards; the general design of the warrant card; the suitability of the warrant card for those with disabilities; and the use of business cards.

Eighty-one per cent of respondents were satisfied with the current method of police vehicle identification. Three general themes ran throughout the comments: lack of knowledge; design and location of vehicle markings; and identification of unmarked cars.

Just over half (52 per cent) of respondents provided views on the problem areas associated with police identification. Many of these comments repeated themes raised under earlier questions.

When asked how the current method of police identification might be improved, 53 per cent of respondents provided comments, many of which repeated the same themes mentioned throughout the report.

Just over half (52 per cent) of respondents provided general comments. These comments repeated themes already discussed in the main report or reiterated respondents' satisfaction with the current method of police identification. However, three new themes emerged: opening hours of the police station; relationship with the public; and that the research is encouraging.

Police Consultation Survey

Of the 1,000 sample of Police Officers who were contacted 307 (31 per cent) responded.

The majority of respondents (87 per cent) indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer uniform identification. Four general themes ran throughout respondents' comments: the wearing of name badges; the epaulette number and force number should be the same; the visibility and quality of means of identification; and the feeling that there is no need to change the current arrangements.

A similar majority (88 per cent) of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer identification on equipment. Three general themes ran throughout the comments: not all police equipment is identifiable; batons and other equipment should be marked with a unique identifier; and there is no need to change the current arrangements.

Around two thirds (68 per cent) of officers indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer identification by means of a warrant card. Three general themes ran throughout the content of the responses: the inclusion of the officer's date of birth on the card; the ease of forgery; and the quality of the card.

Eighty-eight per cent of officers were satisfied with the current method of police vehicle identification. There were three general themes throughout the comments: the current method of vehicle identification is adequate; the addition of a number or symbol to marked or unmarked cars; and the use of unmarked cars was necessary and should be maintained.

Forty-five per cent of officers provided views on the problem areas associated with police identification. Five general themes ran throughout the comments: the personal security of Police Officers; problems with potential impersonation; problems with malicious complaints; officers' numerals not being displayed; and identification for plain clothes officers.

Executive Summary

When asked how the current method of police identification might be improved, 33 per cent of officers provided comments, many of which repeated the same themes mentioned throughout the report. These included: both dissatisfaction with and support for the wearing of name badges; improving the quality of the warrant card; clearer markings on the uniform; the use of serial numbers, and in particular the force number; public awareness of police identification; police station security; and the use of badges and wallets.

Just over half (51 per cent) of officers provided general comments. These comments repeated themes already discussed in the main report or reiterated respondents' satisfaction with the current method of police identification. However, two new themes emerged: the issue of parity with other police forces; and the use of business cards.

Focus Group

To enhance and build upon the information derived from the postal consultation exercise, a focus group was held on 5 November 2004. Participants included four respondents to the consultation survey, one staff member from the Office of the Police Ombudsman, one staff member from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and a member of the Police Service for Northern Ireland involved in the re-design of the current police warrant card.

All participants were asked their opinion on: police uniform number; police name badge; police warrant card; police fire retardant overalls; police helmet; police vehicle; and police fluorescent coat.

The group discussed each of the seven areas of police identification and came to a number of conclusions. These included positive points such as the familiarity of the public with some of the methods of identification, and problematic areas, such as difficulties that may be encountered by people with disabilities. Suggestions for improvement included making police items of uniform such as overalls and fluorescent coats more easily distinguishable from the other emergency services. A further issue to be raised was the implications for the personal security of officers of making their identity known.

Interviews

Three face to face interviews were carried out with consultation respondents who expressed an interest in taking part further in the research but who were unable to attend the focus group.

The findings of the interviews were quite similar to the other consultation exercises. Participants felt that epaulette numbers were sometimes difficult to see, especially if sitting in a car or of small stature. There were varying points of view on the wearing of name badges. Participants were encouraged by the proposal to include Braille on the new warrant cards. It was felt that police Land Rovers should carry a reference to their station or unit, and there was a view that the new police uniform is too casual.

Benchmarking

A total of ten police services across the UK, as well as the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) provided details on the methods of police identification used within their particular areas of jurisdiction. The information obtained can be used as a benchmark when examining issues surrounding police identification within the PSNI. The findings are presented at Annex 1.

Recommendations

The report makes a number of recommendations in relation to police identification, particularly in respect of uniform. These are that:

- PSNI policy on the wearing of name badges should be annually reviewed in light of the prevailing security situation and the Chief Constable should set a target date by which it will be compulsory for all officers to display name identification badges;
- in the absence of name badges, breast pocket numeral identification should be introduced;
- police personal issue equipment, including radios, CS spray, batons, firearms and handcuffs, should be uniquely linked to individual officers;
- police vehicles should have unique identifiers permanently in view on the sides and on the roof. These should be removed only with the authority of an officer of Superintendent rank or above;
- the prevailing method of officer identification should be clearly marked on police fluorescent coats;
- the sleeves and trim of fluorescent coats should be changed to police blue to clearly distinguish police from other emergency services;
- the use of business cards by officers should be promoted and encouraged;
- the PSNI should produce and disseminate a leaflet detailing all means used by the police to identify themselves;
- the clarity of epaulette numerals should be improved; and
- warrant cards should be redesigned to facilitate persons with visual disability.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

The Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland was established by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 to provide an impartial and independent system for investigating complaints against the police in Northern Ireland. The Police Ombudsman is committed to carrying out research and consultation to improve the quality and effectiveness of the police complaints system and to inform the public about its powers of independent investigations.

Background to the Investigative Research

Under Section 60A of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 the Police Ombudsman may investigate a current practice or policy of the police if – (a) the practice or policy comes to her attention under this Part, and (b) she has reason to believe that it would be in the public interest to investigate the practice or policy.

General Background

Prior to 1970 Police Officers in Northern Ireland were identified by means of their uniform¹. Only in Belfast and Londonderry were Police Officers required to wear a three numerical identification on their epaulette. There was no numerical police identification on any other police equipment or on police vehicles.

In 1970 all Police Officers in Northern Ireland were required to wear a unique four numeral identification on their epaulette. Each police vehicle was also provided with identification. Riot helmets also required numerical identification and police warrant cards with photographic identification were introduced.

The issue of identification was raised by the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) in 1996² and 1997³ when observing the policing of events in Northern Ireland. Observers from the CAJ on occasion asked for police identification numbers and were refused them, and on other occasions the numbers were not displayed very clearly. On certain occasions, the police may have feared that such numbers would facilitate identification of them and their families.

The CAJ further highlighted the issue of police identification during the policing of events during the summer of 1997 in Northern Ireland when they asked their observers to see if they faced any similar problems that year and the reports showed a variation in police practice. Whether identification numbers were displayed or not varied from place to place. Sometimes all officers had numbers, sometimes very few had them, and different reasons for the absence of numbers were given to the CAJ observers. When this was conveyed to the Chief Constable's Office, the CAJ were given no satisfactory explanation. A letter was sent by the Chief Constable's office dated 27 October 1997 with an explanation that the Chief Constable had issued a reminder to his commanders of the requirements that sergeants and constables should wear numerals on the epaulettes of all outer garments.

During that same year (1997) the CAJ reported that it is vital in any democratic society that, if there is any reason for concern about the behaviour of Police Officers, that there be effective mechanisms for holding the police to account. A key element in such accountability is being able to identify individual officers to their superior officers should a complaint need to be lodged.

In 1999 the Report of the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland (the "Patten Report") made a number of recommendations with regards to police identification. Section 7.11 of the report recommended that members of the [neighbourhood] policing team should serve at least three and preferably five years in the same neighbourhood, that they should wear their names clearly displayed on their uniforms, and that their uniforms should also bear the name of the locality for which they are responsible. Section 8.10 recommends that, at least, the word "Police" should be painted onto the sides [of Land Rovers]. Section 9.18 recommends that officers' identification numbers should be clearly visible on their protective clothing, just as they should be on regular uniforms. Section 17.6 recommends that the Northern Ireland Police Service adopt a new badge and symbols which are entirely free from any association with either the British or Irish States. Finally, section 17.7 recommends that the colour of the current police uniform be retained.

An analysis of complaints recorded by the Police Ombudsman's Office between August and October 2004 revealed 15 complaints relating to the issue of police identification: ten complaints related to the failure of Police Officers to identify themselves; three complaints related to identification issues surrounding unmarked police vehicles; and two related to the failure of Police Officers to wear high visibility garments and the failure of an officer to display a shoulder numeral on the police issue pullover. The following reflect a sample of the allegations made:

- that an officer failed to identify himself when he stopped the complainant in relation to his driving;
- that plain clothed officers who called at the complainant's property failed to identify themselves as Police Officers: "Within minutes two PSNI officers were knocking on my door - they gave no names, produced no identification";
- that the officer who assaulted him failed to provide his number;
- that officers removed their numbers from their shirts in order to avoid being identified; and
- that when the complainant asked for the officer's name and number the officer refused to give his name, stating that his number was on his shirt. Because of the way the officer was positioned, the complainant found it difficult to read the number on the lapel of the officer's shirt.

"I asked for their numbers but they refused to let me see them."

¹ Information courtesy of the Police Museum, Headquarters, Brooklyn.

² Committee on the Administration of Justice, (1996) *The Misrule of Law, a Report on the Policing of Events During the Summer of 1996 in Northern Ireland*.

³ The Committee of the Administration of Justice (CAJ), *Policing the Police, a Report on the Policing of Events During the Summer of 1997 in Northern Ireland*.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Police General Orders Regarding Identification

The Police Service of Northern Ireland has a number of general orders relating to police identification.

Police uniform number

The General Order 33/2001 *'Wearing of numeral numbers and rank insignia on riot helmets by officers of Inspector rank and above'* provides instructions under Article 55 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000:

The Chief Constable shall make arrangements for each officer to be assigned a serial number. The Chief Constable shall ensure that, as far as practicable, the number assigned, under this section, to a Police Officer is so displayed on his uniform as to be clearly visible at all times when he is on duty and in uniform.

Police name badges

The General Order 50/2003 *'Police Service of Northern Ireland uniform – wearing of name badge'* indicates that name badges should be worn by officers up to and including the rank of Inspector who are engaged in Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) duties as their core function. If NPT Officers are required to perform duties that are not their core function, such as arrest or Vehicle Check Point operations, they may remove their name badges. Furthermore, in circumstances where the NPT officers feel they should not wear name badges on the grounds of security, a risk assessment will be carried out by the District Command Unit (DCU) Commander and kept on record. Where NPT Officers feel that they should not wear a name badge due to the prevailing security situation or a specific threat assessment, they can also forward a report to their DCU commander outlining the reasons why they do not wish to wear a name badge.

Officers of Chief Inspector rank do not display shoulder numerals provided the number, which would be worn on the shoulder, is displayed on their name badge and the name badge is worn. Officers of Chief Inspector rank and above will continue to display numbers on their shoulders when dressed in public order overalls. In order to comply with Section 55 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, senior officers will be issued with four name badges, one of which will be specifically designed for use with the tunic. The name badges must be worn at all times when in uniform, as they will contain the officer's numerals. The badge will show the name, rank and DCU/department of the officer.

Police Land Rovers

The General Order 40/99, *'Identification marks on Land Rovers'* provides instructions for identification marks to be issued for use on Land Rovers used in public order duties. These identification marks allow Technical Support Group (TSG) members and other Land Rover crew to quickly identify their

own vehicle and to assist with command and control.

Each identification mark consists of three black characters on white (Belfast region), yellow (South Region) or green (North Region) backgrounds. The first character of each code is a letter that gives the division of the TSG or sub-division. The second character of the code is a number representing the current divisional number of the TSG or sub-division. Finally, the third character of the code is another letter that identifies the vehicle crew within the Mobile Support Unit (MSU) or sub-division. Black lines above the three characters distinguish a level two from a level one TSG, while black lines above and below the three characters distinguish a level three from level two TSG.

Every Land Rover has four 'slots', each on the front, back and sides, into which the identification marks slide. The identification marks are primarily for use in public order situations but can be used at the discretion of local command for 'normal' day-to-day policing.

The PSNI is currently researching identification marks on vehicles to aid aerial identification.

Police helmet

A memorandum issued to all regional Assistant Chief Constables, Sub-Divisional Commanders, and regional TSGs on 27 November 2000 provided instructions regarding helmet identification markings. The instructions indicated that all helmets have the word 'POLICE' on front of helmet. Officers up to Chief Inspector rank display identification number (shoulder numeral). In the case of Inspector and Chief Inspector, where original shoulder numerals have been re-issued, such members will be allocated a new shoulder numeral, held on member's personal printout, and these will be displayed on the helmet. The identification numbers are white on black background and are placed centrally above the 'POLICE' transfer. Superintendent and above wear their badge of rank in place of the identification number.

In 2003 it was discovered through investigations undertaken by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland that when the public order helmet visor was halfway up, the sticker displaying an officer's service number was no longer visible. Subsequently, police operations directed that an additional sticker should be placed on the Public Order Riot Helmet, in a position where it can be seen, even when the visor is up and the other sticker is hidden.

There are identification markings on the rear of the helmet to indicate level one, two, and three TSG. Level one and two TSG have a three-character code on the rear of the helmet to identify the member's region, division, unit and sub-unit. Level three TSG will have a two character code representing the region, division and unit. The markings are based on the present vehicle identification.

For command ranks the badges of rank for Chief Inspector and above will be worn on the rear of helmets. Chief Inspector rank will be three pips worn horizontally. Superintendent rank will be a crown. Chief Superintendent rank will be a pip with a crown above. Specialist groups such as civilian members of the TSG, photography branch, first aid members etc. will be issued with a shoulder numeral for helmet identification as in the case of Inspector or Chief Inspector ranks whose original shoulder numeral has been re-issued. All other members of Sergeant or Inspector rank not identified for Level two or three TSG, or not public order trained to Level two standard, will wear their badge of rank on the rear of the helmet.

Rationale for the study

An important aspect of investigating complaints against the police is to identify any Police Officer(s) associated with the complaint. The identification of Police Officers is critical to the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. If a complainant cannot identify the officer(s) involved in the incident complained of then the investigation of said complaint is difficult, if not impossible.

Between 6 November 2000 and 31 December 2004 the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland received 12,539 complaints against the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Of these 12,539 complaints 7,541 (60 per cent) contained information regarding the officer(s) involved.

Clearly it is important that the current methods of identification are of the standards expected by the public and that the public are aware of the various methods by which an officer can be identified.

An important aspect of investigating complaints against the police is to identify any Police Officer(s) associated with the complaint. A number of complaints made to the Police Ombudsman have raised issues regarding the display of police identification. As stated previously, the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) also highlighted the issue of police identification in 1996 and 1997.

In the light of public concern the Police Ombudsman decided to initiate a policy and practice investigation into the issues surrounding the area of police identification.

Aims of the Investigation

The main aim of the investigation is to inform the Police Ombudsman, the police and the public of the relevant issues associated with methods of police identification.

The investigation comprised five elements:

- a consultation survey of the views of the public on the current methods of identification within the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI);
- a consultation survey of the views of the police on the current methods of identification within the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI);
- a semi-structured focus group with interested parties;
- in-depth interviews with consultees; and
- a benchmarking exercise on the methods of police identification used by police services throughout the UK.

The consultation surveys, interviews and focus group sought to gather information on the views of the public and the police on:

- the current method of Police Officer uniform identification;
- the current method of police equipment identification;
- the current method of police identification by means of a warrant card;
- the current method of police vehicle identification;
- any perceived problem areas associated with police identification; and
- how the current methods of police identification might be improved.

The benchmarking exercise included police services in England, Scotland and Wales.

The following sections of this report describe the consultation survey methodologies, outcome of the consultation surveys, outcomes of the focus group and interviews with respondents. Annex 1 sets out the results of the benchmarking exercise. The report concludes with a brief discussion in respect of the main findings and makes recommendations arising from the views expressed.

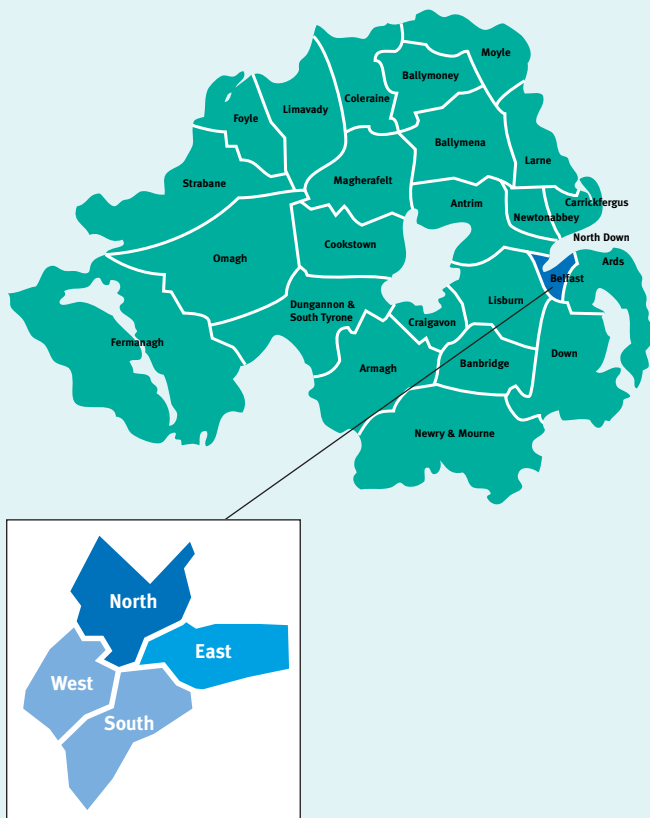
Chapter 2: Survey Methodology

Public Consultation Survey

A total of 561 individuals and organisations on the Police Ombudsman distribution list were issued consultation questionnaires. These were comprised of: 254 (45 per cent) community groups, 108 (19 per cent) Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), 107 (19 per cent) advice groups, 30 (5 per cent) youth groups, 30 (5 per cent) District Policing Partnerships (DPP) managers, 16 (3 per cent) women's groups, and 16 (3 per cent) public bodies.

The selected participants came from across Northern Ireland and represented all 29 District Command Units (DCUs) of the PSNI. Figure 1 below shows a map⁴ of Northern Ireland with the 29 DCUs.

Figure 1: Map of Northern Ireland with District Command Units (DCU's)



The consultation questionnaire consisted of eight questions, both closed and open-ended to maximise the opportunity for respondents to provide their full range of views.

The data was collected during July 2004. All returned forms were anonymous and were treated in the strictest confidence by the Police Ombudsman's Office.

To aid with the planned interviews and focus groups the last section of the questionnaire asked participants to indicate their willingness to help with any further investigations into the issue of police identification.

Copies of the covering letter (Appendix A), the consultation form (Appendix B) and the reminder letter (Appendix C) are appended.

The questionnaire was also made available for completion on the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland Website⁵.

Police Consultation Survey

The PSNI provided to the Police Ombudsman's office a ten per cent random sample of 1,000 serving Police Officers. The same consultation questionnaire and covering letter that was issued to public groups and individuals was also issued to those officers at their station addresses, which represented all 29 DCUs.

The data was collected between December 2004 and February 2005. All returned forms were anonymous and were treated in the strictest confidence by the Police Ombudsman's Office.

⁴ Obtained from www.psni.co.uk/local/policing

⁵ www.policeombudsman.org

Chapter 3: Public Consultation Survey Results

Response Rates

Of the 561 participants who were contacted 143 (25 per cent) responded. A further seven anonymous responses were recorded from the website.

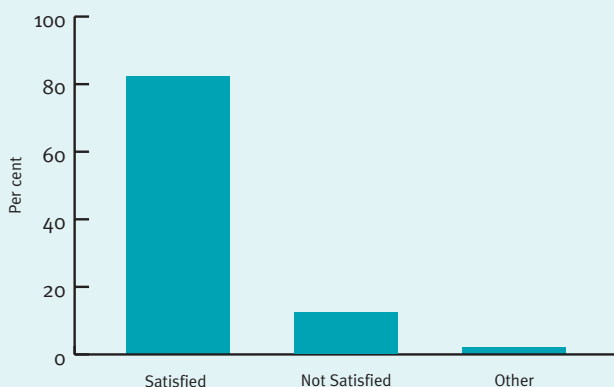
Of those 143 respondents who completed the consultation questionnaire, 43 per cent were from community groups, 22 per cent were MLAs, 13 per cent were from DPPs, 11 per cent from advice groups, 5 per cent from public bodies, 4 per cent from youth groups and 3 per cent from women's groups.

The respondents came from across Northern Ireland and represented 27 of the 29⁶ DCUs of the PSNI, see Appendix D.

Current Method of Police Uniform Identification

Level of Satisfaction

Figure 2: Public satisfaction with uniform identification



Of the 143 respondents, 118 (83 per cent) indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer uniform identification, 19 (13 per cent) were not satisfied, 3 respondents (2 per cent) indicated 'other' and a further 3 respondents (2 per cent) declined to indicate a response.

Six of the 19 respondents who indicated that they were not satisfied with the current Police Officer uniform identification were MLAs, 6 were from community groups, 4 from DPPs, and 1 each from advice groups, public bodies and youth groups.

Comments

Of those respondents who indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer uniform identification, 37 (31 per cent) provided a comment. In comparison, respondents who indicated that they were not satisfied or indicated 'other' all provided a comment. Two out of the three participants who declined to indicate a response provided a comment.

Three general themes ran throughout the comments from the respondents:

- location and size of the epaulette numbers;
- the obscuration of the epaulette numbers; and
- wearing of name badges in conjunction with epaulette numbers.

A number of respondents thought that the location and size of the epaulette numbers were inappropriate:

"Not always easily read from a short distance. Can only be read close up."

(Respondent 180)

"...They are either too small and in the wrong place. How can you see a number at right angles on the shoulder?..."

(Respondent 129)

There was also concern amongst some respondents regarding the obscuration of epaulette numbers:

"...Still today officers cover their numbers to harass young people."

(Respondent 240)

Some respondents raised issues around the wearing of name badges in conjunction with epaulette numbers and also with regards to civilians employed by the PSNI.

"All officers should have name badges."

(Respondent 276)

⁶ There were no returns from either DCU Castlereagh or DCU Armagh

Chapter 3: Public Consultation Survey Results

“Identification by epaulette number is not particularly easy to see, and lends itself to the image of the police as being nameless and faceless. We would prefer an American army-style method of identification, where an officer’s last name is clearly displayed on the hat or helmet, and on the front and back of the uniform.”

(Respondent 503)

“Given continuing threats to PSNI officers, I believe we would be endangering their lives if names were used rather than shoulder numbers on their uniform.”

(Respondent 396)

“Civilians employed by the PSNI should be compelled to wear name badges or ID cards when on duty.”

(Respondent 446)

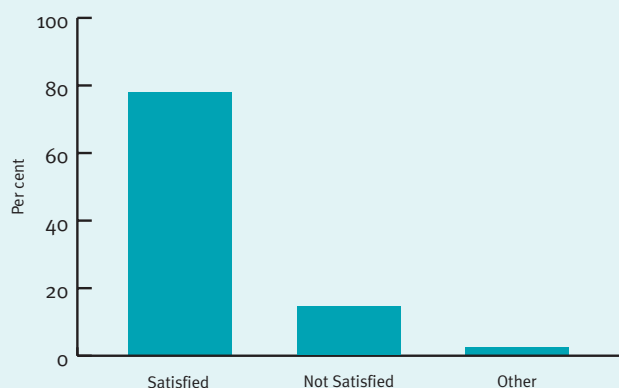
“Not all officers wear name badges on day-to-day operational duty.”

(Respondent 388)

Current Method of Police Equipment Identification

Level of Satisfaction

Figure 3: Public satisfaction with equipment identification



One hundred and nine respondents (76 per cent) indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of identification on police equipment, 18 (13 per cent) were not satisfied, 10 respondents (7 per cent) indicated ‘other’ and 6 (4 per cent) declined to provide a response.

Of the 18 respondents who indicated that they were not satisfied with the current method of identification on equipment, six were MLAs, four were from advice groups, three from community groups, two from youth groups, two from DPPs and one from public bodies.

Comments

Of those respondents who indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of identification on equipment, 22 (20 per cent) provided a comment. Sixteen out of the eighteen respondents who indicated that they were not satisfied, and all respondents who indicated ‘other’ provided a comment. One of the six participants who declined to indicate a response provided a comment.

Although there were many positive comments both regarding the police force in general and the appropriateness of the current identification on equipment, there were nevertheless four general areas of concern:

- lack of knowledge regarding identification on equipment;
- size and location and obscurity of identification on equipment;
- that all equipment should have individual officer identification; and
- wearing of name badges instead of numbers.

Many respondents indicated that they were unlikely to be in a situation to view the police equipment and therefore had little or no knowledge regarding identification on police equipment:

“I have not seen the present method of identification and I have had no reason to inspect their equipment.”

(Respondent 195)

Respondents mentioned difficulties with the size and location of the identification on equipment and further reiterated the issue of obscurity:

“The helmet number is not very noticeable (i.e. without being told it is there, it does not catch the eye).”

(Respondent 46)

“There are difficulties for those with sight problems.”

(Respondent 219)

“Helmets should be more easily identified by ensuring numbers are displayed on front and back alongside a colour that corresponds with the Tactical Support Unit (TSG) to which the PSNI member is attached.”

(Respondent 446)

“Visors can obscure numbers on helmets.”

(Respondent 139)

A number of respondents suggested that all police equipment should have a unique identifier to an individual officer:

“The only police equipment that I am aware of being identified is public order head/helmets. I consider there is a greater need for identifying all equipment...”

(Respondent 379)

“Numbers should appear on batons, handcuffs, and boots. Also, on all carried equipment - riot gear etc...”

(Respondent 37)

The issue of identification by name instead of number was highlighted by respondents:

“Name/rank on helmet/overalls - especially in public order situation...”

(Respondent 486)

“Perhaps name on riot helmets.”

(Respondent 443)

As highlighted above, just over three-quarters of respondents were satisfied with the police identification on equipment. This satisfaction was further reiterated in comments provided by respondents:

“Identification in all circumstances shows that police in every way are answerable.”

(Respondent 441)

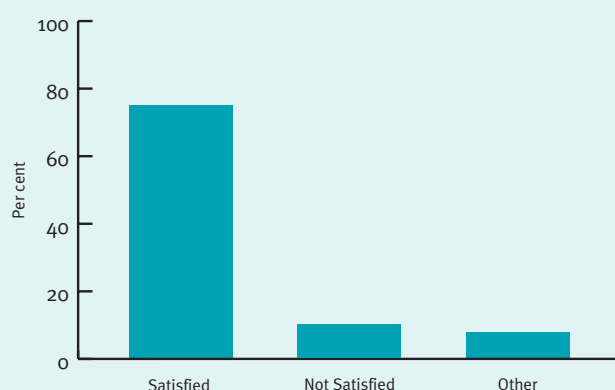
“It is clear and inspires confidence.”

(Respondent 398)

Police Identification by Means of a Warrant Card

Level of Satisfaction

Figure 4: Public satisfaction with identification by means of a warrant card



One hundred and nine respondents (76 per cent) indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer identification by means of a warrant card, 15 (9 per cent) were not satisfied, 10 (7 per cent) indicated ‘other’ and 9 (8 per cent) declined to provide a response.

Of the 15 respondents who indicated that they were not satisfied with the current method of Police Officer identification by means of a warrant card, 4 were from community groups, 4 were MLAs, 4 were from advice groups, 2 from DPPs and 1 from youth groups.

Chapter 3: Public Consultation Survey Results

Comments

Of those respondents who indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer identification by means of a warrant card, 16 (15 per cent) provided a comment. Twelve of the 15 respondents who indicated that they were not satisfied, and all respondents who indicated 'other' provided a comment. Six of the nine respondents who declined to indicate a response provided a comment.

Four general themes ran throughout the comments:

- lack of knowledge regarding warrant cards;
- the general design of the warrant card;
- suitability of the warrant card for those with disabilities; and
- the use of business cards.

From the comments provided it is clear that many respondents had no knowledge of or had never seen a police warrant card:

“I don't know-have never seen one.”

(Respondent 163)

“We have no knowledge of the aspect and cannot comment.”

(Respondent 127)

There were also comments regarding the general design of the warrant card:

“The current PSNI warrant card could easily be replicated at home as it is a standard plastic card. Greater consideration should be given to producing a more professional and unique warrant card i.e. PSNI should also be made visible and produced on request by public.”

(Respondent 379)

“Cluttered. Lacks contrast.

“(Respondent 316)

“Too easily withheld, or forged?”

(Respondent 341)

Respondents also made comments regarding the suitability of the warrant card for those with disabilities.

“...Has any thought been given to Braille cards, e.g. for disabled, blind and partially sighted.”

(Respondent 398)

“...would advise that significant numbers of people including some disabled people cannot read. PSNI should seek innovative ways to deal with this issue.”

(Respondent 24)

Finally, some respondents mentioned the possible use of business cards.

“If there is an occasion to show warrant card, perhaps a business card with officer's name etc should be given for reference.”

(Respondent 226)

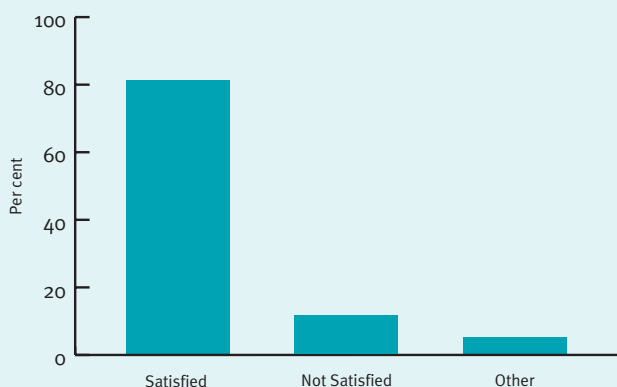
“When warrant cards are shown, it can be difficult for people to take in and/or retain the details. Police Officers should carry business cards showing their name, rank, police number, and police station, with contact details for leaving with members of the public when appropriate and when requested to do so.”

(Respondent 503)

Police Vehicle Identification

Level of Satisfaction

Figure 5: Public satisfaction with vehicle identification



One hundred and sixteen respondents (81 per cent) indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of police vehicle identification, 17 (12 per cent) were not satisfied, 7 (5 per cent) indicated 'other' and 3 (2 per cent) declined to provide a response.

Of the 17 respondents who indicated that they were not satisfied with the current method of police vehicle identification, 6 were MLAs, 5 from DPPs, 4 from community groups and 2 from public bodies.

Comments

Of those respondents who indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of police vehicle identification, 23 (20 per cent) provided a comment. Ten of the 17 respondents who indicated that they were not satisfied, and all respondents who indicated 'other' provided a comment. All three respondents who declined to indicate a response also declined to provide a comment.

Three general themes ran throughout the comments:

- lack of knowledge regarding police vehicle identification;
- design and location of police vehicle identification; and
- identification of unmarked cars.

Many respondents had no knowledge of the current method of police vehicle identification:

What is the current method? Having to ask the question implies that no specific marks have been noticed.

(Respondent 346)

There were a number of comments on the design and location of the police vehicle identification:

“All PSNI vehicles should bear a clearly distinguishable serial number i.e. both sides and on roof of vehicle as in mainland police forces.”

(Respondent 407)

“Difficult for people with sight problems.”

(Respondent 218)

“A colour corresponding to the TSG deployed in the Land Rover should also be displayed alongside the number on the front and back.”

(Respondent 446)

“Each police vehicle should have a clear identification number other than the vehicle registration number.”

(Respondent 502)

Respondents also made comments regarding the police practice of using unmarked cars:

“It is great to see the ‘chequered’ cars in circulation but there aren't enough. Still too many “unmarked cars” in circulation, fooling nobody, as they can be pointed out by members of the public.”

(Respondent 226)

“Yes, although ‘unmarked’ vehicles should have flashing police lights (whatever) when driven in emergency modes. I have encountered such vehicles relying only on 2-tone noise & sometimes, but not always, flashing headlamps.”

(Respondent 50)

Chapter 3: Public Consultation Survey Results

Problem Areas with Police Identification

Comments

The questionnaire asked respondents to provide their opinion on the problem areas (if any) associated with police identification. Of the 143 respondents, 74 (52 per cent) provided their opinions.

Twenty-five of the 74 respondents who provided comments were from community groups, 15 were MLAs, 14 were from advice groups, 13 from members of the DPPs, 6 from youth groups, and one from women's groups.

Many of the comments repeated points or issues raised under previous questions. Six general themes ran throughout the comments:

- satisfaction with the current methods of identification;
- lack of police presence;
- display of station information;
- disability and police identification;
- public lack of knowledge of police identification; and
- the new police uniform.

Many respondents were satisfied with the current methods of police identification:

"I do not consider there are problem areas with police identification."

(Respondent 259)

A lack of police presence was mentioned by some respondents:

"The biggest problem is having officers to identify."

(Respondent 148)

Respondents also indicated that they would like to see additional information such as the station the Police Officer(s) were from:

"If you have more than one station in a district command unit, the public need to be able to establish from which station the response has come - hence the need to have the appropriate station displayed on an officer's identification badge."

(Respondent 407)

"Might be better if they said which station they came from."

(Respondent 212)

Difficulties for people with disabilities, particularly visual impairment, were highlighted:

"People with visual impairment may have difficulty with current forms of ID for police."

(Respondent 367)

"Difficulty for people with eyesight problems. Not necessarily too small - cluttered, not the best choices of font. Emphasis on rank rather than their name."

(Respondent 416)

The most frequently mentioned theme with regards to problem areas was the public's lack of knowledge of police identification:

"I believe that the vast majority of people are unaware that police can be identified through the said means."

(Respondent 32)

"Current identification apart from the shoulder numbers is not highly visible. I do not think the general public are aware that Police Officers or equipment have such identification."

(Respondent 375)

Finally, some respondents expressed opinions on the new police uniform:

"At times the present PSNI uniform is very similar to shop security outfits and sometimes worse when no hats, ties or badges are worn."

(Respondent 195)

"The uniform at present is little different from some security firms."

(Respondent 539)

How Police Identification Might be Improved

Comments

The consultation questionnaire asked for comments on how the current methods of police identification might be improved. Of the 143 respondents, 76 (53 per cent) provided comments.

Thirty-two of the 76 respondents who provided comments were from community groups, 14 were MLAs, 13 were members of the DPPs, 7 were from advice groups, 6 from women's groups, 2 from youth groups and 2 from public bodies.

Many of the recommendations on how the current method of police identification might be improved covered themes mentioned under earlier questions. They included:

- the use of business cards;
- wearing of name badges in conjunction with epaulette numbers;
- the design and location of the identification;
- disability and police identification;
- public lack of knowledge of police identification;
- the new police uniform;
- lack of police presence;
- identification of unmarked cars; and
- that all equipment should have individual officer identification.

In response to this question, as throughout the questionnaire, there were further comments that respondents were satisfied with the current methods of police identification and saw no reason for them to be changed.

Other General Comments

Comments

The consultation questionnaire provided an opportunity for respondents to make any other general comments. Of the 141 respondents, 74 (52 per cent) provided comments.

Thirty-two of the 74 respondents who provided comments were from community groups, 14 were MLAs, 13 were members of the DPPs, 7 were from advice groups, 6 from women's groups, 2 from youth groups and 2 from public bodies.

The general comments made reflected themes that arose under earlier questions. Many respondents again repeated their satisfaction with the current methods of police identification. However, three new themes were mentioned:

- opening hours of the police station;
- this research is encouraging; and
- relationship with the public.

Respondents provided general comments regarding the limited opening hours of some police stations:

“Our association are very concerned with the closure or limited opening hours of police stations...”

(Respondent 148)

“Persons in area feel very vulnerable especially those residing on own and OAPs. With the current system in operation there is very little manpower around and police stations been closed. Cars can now be stolen during daylight hours 2.00pm-6.00pm. Community has lost all faith in policing and feel they have been let down by the system.”

(Respondent 160)

Respondents were also encouraged that research into police practice and policy matters such as police identification was being undertaken by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland:

“From my experience of working with community groups (often at interfaces) the issue of identifying officers is an important one. I am glad, therefore, that the present research is happening.”

(Respondent 46)

“The fact that this consultation is being carried out is encouraging. No doubt you will benchmark with other police forces, worldwide to determine examples of good practice.”

(Respondent 346)

Finally, some respondents also mentioned the importance of the police relationship with the public.

“Identification is not only about name badges and so on. It is also about the way in which the police interact with the public. When a Police Officer has a good relationship with the public, his or her uniform is forgotten. When the relationship is bad, all that is seen is the uniform. A culture needs to develop in which it is the norm that Police Officers are easily identified, and in which officers are, indeed, proud to display their names on their uniforms and at their desks.”

(Respondent 503)

Chapter 3: Public Consultation Survey Results

Website Responses

Seven anonymous respondents completed the consultation questionnaire from the Police Ombudsman's website. Six respondents were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer uniform identification and five of the seven provided comments. As with the postal survey, some of the comments were positive and viewed the current method as satisfactory:

"The new numbers are better than the old metallic ones...and can be seen more easily."

Some respondents however, repeated the theme of location and size of the epaulette numbers:

"Numbers too small to see on shoulder."

Six of the seven respondents were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer identification on equipment. The seventh respondent indicated an 'other' response. Four respondents provided comments. As with the postal survey, respondents highlighted the themes of lack of knowledge, and the size and location of identification on equipment:

"I never cause street disturbances or riots so I personally very rarely see police in public order equipment."

"Numerals too small again. Should be as big as the word POLICE on the front and back of the uniform."

With regards to the current method of police identification by means of a warrant card, four of the seven respondents were satisfied, two were not satisfied and one responded 'other'. Four respondents provided comments. Again, as with the postal survey, the comments highlighted the issues of the suitability of the warrant card for those with disabilities and that the card can easily be replicated:

"Braille ID should be embossed on warrant card."

"A less tamper proof card would be better."

One respondent raised the issue of a lack of public knowledge of warrant cards and made a particularly detailed suggestion on how the public could be better informed:

"Advertisements on television warn people to be wary of callers and to check by way of a phone call, this method of educating the public re: bogus callers should also include the possibility of bogus Police Officers, especially plain clothes officers."

Five respondents regarded the method of identification on police vehicles as satisfactory and two regarded it as not satisfactory. Four provided comments. Some comments reiterated a satisfaction with the current method of identification and some centred on the design and location of police vehicle identification, as already highlighted in the main report:

"Large numbers on the roof as in London would help."

"ID numbers on side and roof."

Of the seven respondents who completed the form, two provided their opinion on the problem areas associated with police identification. One reiterated satisfaction with the methods employed and one commented on the wearing of helmets:

"Too big helmets and you can't see their faces."

Five respondents provided comments regarding how the current methods of police identification might be improved. Most of these comments provided constructive suggestions on methods of officer and vehicle identification:

"I believe a calling card with name, rank and no. DCU and station of the officer investigating your complaint should be left with the complainant. It not only provides ID but serves as a reminder should you wish to get in touch with that officer again."

"By having a more tamper proof ID card and numbers on roof of police vehicles."

"Marking on vehicle indicating station of origin."

Four respondents provided other general comments, which were generally supportive of the current methods of identification.

Chapter 4: Police Consultation Survey Results

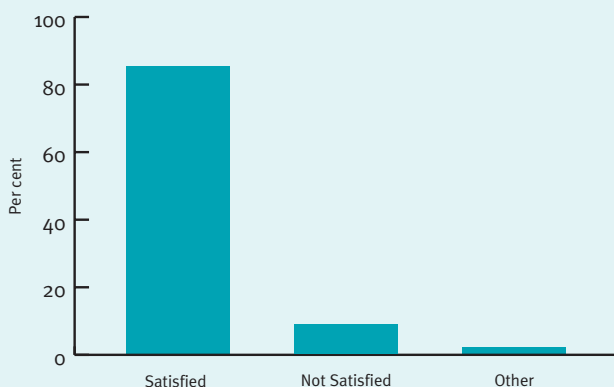
Response Rate

Of the 1,000 Police Officers who were issued consultation questionnaires, 307 (31 per cent) responded.

Current Method of Police Uniform Identification

Level of Satisfaction

Figure 6: Police satisfaction with uniform identification



Of the 307 police respondents, 269 (87 per cent) indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer uniform identification, 27 (9 per cent) were not satisfied, 9 (3 per cent) indicated 'other' and a further 2 respondents (1 per cent) declined to indicate a response.

Comments

One hundred and one Police Officers provided comments on the current method of uniform identification. Of those respondents who indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer uniform identification, 68 (25 per cent) provided a comment. In comparison 24 (89 per cent) of respondents who indicated that they were not satisfied and all 9 who had indicated 'other' provided a comment. One of the two respondents who declined to indicate a response on satisfaction provided a comment.

The comments were analysed for themes running throughout the content. Four general themes were identified⁷:

- the wearing of name badges;
- the epaulette number and officer's force number should be the same;
- visibility and quality of means of identification; and
- there is no need to change the current arrangements.

Many officers felt that openly displaying name badges could pose an unnecessary risk to their personal security:

"I do not agree with having to wear a name badge. Shoulder numerals should be sufficient. People with 'rare' surnames leave themselves (and their families) vulnerable to terrorists."

(Respondent 119)

"Due to ongoing and recorded threats against Police Officers, I believe this method assists serious criminals and terrorists in identifying officers, causing serious stress and concern for the officer and family."

(Respondent 298)

There was also concern that an officer's name could be used by troublemakers or suspects to intimidate the officer or aggravate a situation:

"...This has led in my experience to higher levels of personal abuse."

(Respondent 91).

Some officers also had concerns that their name could be used to either infer further information about them, such as their religion, or to trace more detailed information, such as their address.

Only two officers' comments supported the wearing of name badges and one made a suggestion on how a compromise could be reached:

"Name badges should be compulsory, or those that do not want to wear [them] should wear a similar badge with a letter representing station and a number. i.e. Grosvenor Road BD101 (no more digits than five). Public will remember letters and short numbers."

(Respondent 259)

⁷ Some respondents provided comments relating to more than one theme.

Chapter 4: Police Consultation Survey Results

A number of officers expressed dissatisfaction with the actual numbers and how they are displayed. Some felt that the epaulette number and the force number should be the same:

“I have never understood why shoulder numerals are not the same as service numbers. As the service has reduced considerably there is a potential to issue all officers with a four digit shoulder number.”

(Respondent 281)

Others felt the visibility of the numbers was poor:

“Numbers are too small and may be hard to read in a public order situation. Should be repeated on front of uniform and be fluorescent.”

(Respondent 8)

Remarks were also made on the poor quality of the name badges.

“Name badges are poor quality and break easily.”

(Respondent 191)

Many officers’ comments supported their satisfaction with the current methods of identification:

“I think the current system is known by the public and is acceptable.”

(Respondent 27)

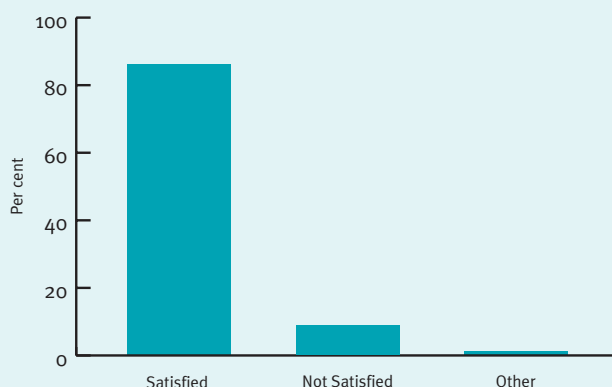
“The current system allows for the identification of officers while protecting their identities. It is a reasonable balance.”

(Respondent 78)

Current Method of Police Equipment Identification

Level of Satisfaction

Figure 7: Police satisfaction with equipment identification



Two hundred and seventy one Police Officers (88 per cent) indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer identification on equipment, 29 (9 per cent) were not satisfied, 5 respondents (2 per cent) indicated ‘other’ and 2 (1 per cent) respondents declined to provide a response.

Comments

Sixty three Police Officers provided comments on the current method of police equipment identification. Of those respondents who indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer uniform identification, 35 (13 per cent) provided a comment. In comparison, 23 (79 per cent) of respondents who indicated that they were not satisfied and all 5 who had indicated 'other' provided a comment. One of the two respondents who declined to indicate a response on satisfaction provided a comment.

Three general themes ran throughout the comments:

- not all police equipment is identifiable;
- batons and other equipment should be marked with a unique identifier; and
- there is no need to change the current arrangements.

Many of those who commented noted that there is no standard way of identifying police equipment:

"Apart from firearms, nothing else is identifiable."

(Respondent 99)

Some made suggestions as to how equipment could be made identifiable, including micro-chipping and DNA marking. Most suggestions were more practicable:

"Name, rank, number should be on every item."

(Respondent 214)

"Police issue batons (non-public order) should be engraved with shoulder numeral in white identifiable [ink]."

(Respondent 137)

"Batons should be 'plate' etched, personal issue."

(Respondent 301)

A number of officers were content with the current system:

"The system in place is clearly visible and appropriate."

(Respondent 27)

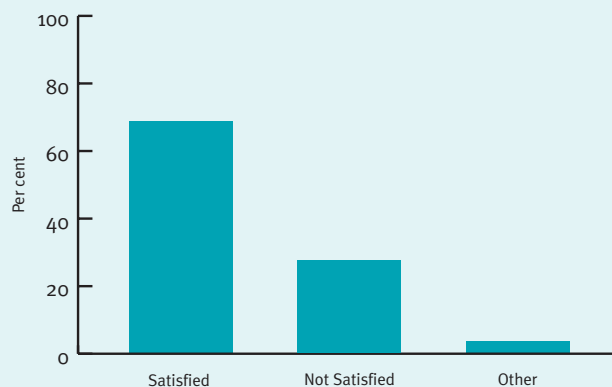
"No problems encountered."

(Respondent 31)

Police Identification by Means of a Warrant Card

Level of Satisfaction

Figure 8: Police satisfaction with warrant card



Two hundred and ten officers (68 per cent) indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer identification by means of a warrant card, 84 (27 per cent) were not satisfied, 9 respondents (3 per cent) indicated 'other' while 4 (1 per cent) declined to provide a response.

Chapter 4: Police Consultation Survey Results

Comments

One hundred and seventeen Police Officers provided comments on the current method of police identification by means of a warrant card. Of those respondents who indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer uniform identification, 31 (15 per cent) provided a comment. In comparison 77 (92 per cent) of respondents who indicated that they were not satisfied and all 9 who had indicated 'other' provided a comment. Two of the four respondents who declined to indicate a response provided a comment.

Three general themes ran throughout the content of the responses:

- the inclusion of the officer's date of birth on the card;
- the ease of forgery; and
- the quality of the card.

Many officers felt that it was not necessary to include date of birth and could not understand the rationale for making it known publicly:

"A date of birth clearly shown should be removed. There is no requirement to prove a DOB to any party as proof of identity as a Police Officer."

(Respondent 73)

"Current warrant cards display DOB as well as full name. Makes 'identity theft' possible. DOB should not be displayed."

(Respondent 35)

Respondents also expressed concern about how easily a warrant card could be forged:

"The current warrant card is too easily copied and not distinct enough."

(Respondent 95)

"At the minute people on computers can copy anything. I believe they should be uniquely marked i.e. like a bank card with the metal tape."

(Respondent 105)

Some officers made suggestions on how the security of warrant cards could be improved. There was a great deal of support for the introduction of an easily identifiable badge and holder:

"Too easily forged. No colour between police and civilian staff. Should be accompanied by American type shield or other metal badge. Then easily identified as Police Officer for elderly etc. when doing house to house."

(Respondent 216)

"I believe consideration should be given to the introduction of a badge accompanying the warrant card. This would assist in easier identification and perhaps make things more difficult for a potential fraudster."

(Respondent 181)

"I believe if we are to be similar to our colleagues on the mainland we should have the wallet type warrant card. Our warrant card is too similar to that of FMO, civilian staff etc."

(Respondent 102)

There were also many comments regarding the quality of the warrant card:

"...The standard of the card is tacky and cheap..."

(Respondent 32)

"A warrant card bestows important powers and with powers goes responsibilities. The current warrant card looks like an ordinary commercial ID card. It needs to look more 'official' to distinguish it as a warrant card and not just an ID card."

(Respondent 20)

“Current warrant card is rubbish. Cheap looking and I would not accept it as genuine if I was a member of the public.”

(Respondent 83)

Again, many respondents made suggestions on how the quality of the warrant card could be improved, including the use of larger print and photo, an ‘identifiable’ colour and ‘chip and pin’ technology. Many officers commented that the American style wallets and badges would be better:

“The present warrant card is prone to breakage and should be replaced with a more sturdy type, possibly...NYPD type.”

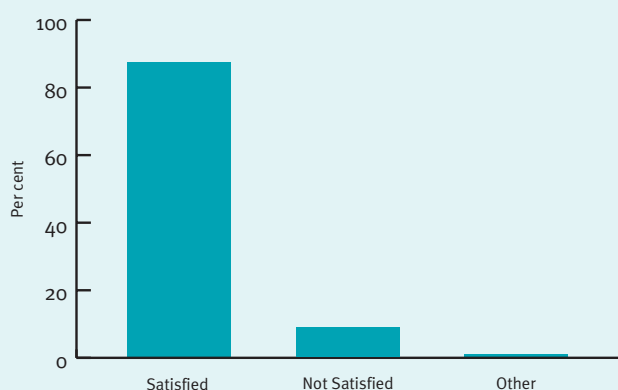
(Respondent 93)

One respondent suggested that it would be useful to attach the police telephone exchange number to the card, so that officers’ identity could be verified.

Police Vehicle Identification

Level of Satisfaction

Figure 9: Police satisfaction with vehicle identification



Two hundred and sixty nine officers (88 per cent) indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of police vehicle identification, 27 (9 per cent) were not satisfied, 7 respondents (2 per cent) indicated ‘other’ and 4 (1 per cent) declined to provide a response.

Comments

Seventy two Police Officers provided comments on the current method of police vehicle identification. Of those respondents who indicated that they were satisfied with the current method of Police Officer uniform identification, 39 (15 per cent) provided a comment. In comparison 26 (96 per cent) of respondents who indicated that they were not satisfied and all 7 who had indicated ‘other’ provided a comment. None of the respondents who declined to indicate a response provided a comment.

Three general themes ran throughout the comments:

- the current method of vehicle identification is adequate;
- the addition of a number or symbol to marked or unmarked cars; and
- the use of unmarked cars was necessary and should be maintained.

Many officers felt that there was no need to change current methods of identification. In particular, it was felt that the vehicle registration mark (VRM, registration number) was an adequate means of identifying vehicles:

“Most ordinary vehicles on patrol use a VRM or if liveried this is sufficient. Attendance of police at place/time is recorded in command and control. Public order – vehicle numbers added are adequate.”

(Respondent 32)

“Vehicles can be identified easily as the system stands.”

(Respondent 78)

“We use livery vehicles. If people can see these what more can we do?”

(Respondent 105)

Some officers felt that the system could be improved by the addition of numbers, call signs or other markings:

“Perhaps visible number on liveried vehicles would be a quicker way of identifying same.”

(Respondent 129)

“All non PC vehicles should have ID on them, e.g. call sign letter.”

(Respondent 20)

“Station/DCU on livery vehicles e.g. Strandtown, Coleraine etc.”

(Respondent 214)

Chapter 4: Police Consultation Survey Results

Officers also felt that the police practice of using unmarked cars was necessary and should be maintained:

“Considering the current climate and possible/probable future threat from dissident terrorist groups towards Police Officers, ‘unmarked’ police cars are a necessary evil.”

(Respondent 95)

“There still remains large sections of Northern Ireland where the use of liveried vehicles poses a security, and therefore health and safety, risk to the occupants.”

(Respondent 235)

Problem Areas with Police Identification

Comments

The questionnaire asked respondents to provide their opinion on the problem areas associated with police identification. Of the 307 respondents, 137 (45 per cent) provided constructive comments and a further 120 (39 per cent) commented that they felt that there were no problems with the current methods of Police Officer identification.

Five general themes ran throughout the comments:

- the personal security of Police Officers;
- problems with potential impersonation;
- problems with malicious complaints;
- officers’ numerals not being displayed; and
- identification for plain clothes officers.

Sixty one respondents (20 per cent of the total sample) expressed concern about the personal security of officers being compromised through revealing their personal identity:

“Security implications re electoral list and identification of other family members. Public order situations people shouting out your name.”

(Respondent 42)

“The problem is to make an officer easy to identify without making his identity and home address easy to locate in the current security situation.”

(Respondent 78)

“Name badges will allow subversives to trace officers (and target them). I think it is a disgrace that Police Officers in this country are forced to wear them.”

(Respondent 169)

“Too many liveried vehicles. Good aiming points for RPGs.”

(Respondent 76)

Issues that had been raised under earlier questions were reiterated, such as the potential for impersonation:

“Bogus callers. Vulnerable groups such as the elderly allowing people into their homes without thoroughly checking their ID.”

(Respondent 29)

“Warrant card too easy to copy.”

(Respondent 225)

Some officers felt that by revealing their identity they were running the risk of it being used to make malicious complaints against them:

“The large number of malicious individuals in society who will use these to formulate complaints for perverse and evil purposes e.g. a group of louts can ‘latch on’ to a particular number etc. and orchestrate a malicious complaint [to] which officers have no real comeback.”

(Respondent 32)

There was also some concern about numerals not always being visible:

“Potential problem areas I believe may arise during public order situations when flak jackets etc. cover shoulder numerals during movement and position of visor covering numerals on helmet.”

(Respondent 181)

Respondents also identified issues around plain clothes officers, not only in relation to identification by the public, but also by other officers:

“Warrant card for plain clothes detectives. Photographic ID and a police insignia in a wallet format would immediately convey quality, professionalism and high standards.”

(Respondent 193)

“People swanning about crime scenes who are not known to everyone.”

(Respondent 18)

“Identification of plain clothed officers is a problem. Need bibs or jackets with ‘police’ under a label or cover.”

(Respondent 44)

How Police Identification Might be Improved

Comments

The questionnaire asked respondents to provide their comments on how the current methods of police identification might be improved. Of the 307 respondents, 100 (33 per cent) made suggestions for improvements and a further 92 (30 per cent) commented that there was no need to try to improve the current system.

Many of the respondents’ recommendations on how the current method of police identification might be improved covered themes raised under earlier questions. They included:

- both dissatisfaction with and support for the wearing of name badges;
- improving the quality of the warrant card;
- clearer markings on the uniform;
- the use of serial numbers, and in particular the force number;
- public awareness of police identification;
- police station security; and
- the use of badges and wallets.

Almost a third of officers sampled felt that current methods of Police Officer identification were adequate, some very strongly so:

“Current levels of identification are sufficient, no further method of identification is necessary.”

(Respondent 195)

“If everyone wears shoulder number and in public order [situation] has number on helmets I don’t think it needs to be improved.”

(Respondent 226)

A number of officers felt that the policy on the wearing of name badges could be improved, or removed altogether:

“Freedom of choice for name badges.”

(Respondent 209)

“If a constable has to wear a badge it should only give his/her service number and station.”

(Respondent 154)

“Lose the name badge before some officer or their spouse sues whoever forces the wearing of them for either the death of a relative or damage to their home.”

(Respondent 169)

However, there was also some support for the wearing of name badges:

“ID badges for community Police Officers where they can easily be identified by role.”

(Respondent 301)

“Officers must now be told to wear name badges. Their name is on a ‘charge sheet’, why not badges? Security situation is becoming a feeble excuse.”

(Respondent 1)

Chapter 4: Police Consultation Survey Results

Quite a number of officers mentioned the warrant card in their response. Some simply felt that it should be improved generally while others made suggestions on how it could be improved:

“A more professional warrant card, especially for use by plain clothed officers such as detectives.”

(Respondent 256)

“Issue of two good quality warrant cards, not plastic, and with good quality colour photographs (not scanned). Issue of proper card holders.”

(Respondent 229)

“The development of warrant cards and entry systems so individuals can use warrant cards to access specific areas – the development of a similar warrant card to that used by the Metropolitan Police should be considered.”

(Respondent 26)

Other suggestions included incorporating a badge or hologram on the card, the use of chip and pin technology and including the officer's signature.

A number of officers felt that the police uniform could be better marked with crests or numbers to enable easier identification:

“I feel that police should have crest and PSNI printed in full on all shirts and clothing, the same as fire and ambulance personnel.”

(Respondent 293)

“Names or numbers need to be visible from the front of the uniforms. It needs to be an integral part of the uniform.”

(Respondent 257)

“...Shoulder numbers on a large patch sewn on to uniforms.”

(Respondent 44)

Some officers also suggested that the numerals allocated could be better utilised to improve identification:

“Badges should be worn displaying numerals, as well as shoulder numerals.”

(Respondent 138)

“Breast badge with numeral included i.e. New York police style.”

(Respondent 170)

“Maybe if numerical identification was more obvious e.g. clearly displayed on uniform.”

(Respondent 94)

The issue of public awareness of methods of identification was raised, with some recognising that members of the public may not always know where to look for their identification:

“Perhaps if the service would, it could use the media platform by running a short ad before tea time news, instructing members of the public as to where exactly to look for police ID on our uniforms and how this actually differs from our service number, as this may cause confusion.”

(Respondent 236)

For some officers police station security was an area for improvement. Concerns were expressed about access to stations:

“Electronic entry to stations via new chip and pin warrant cards or fingerprint system.”

(Respondent 44)

Finally, some officers reiterated earlier suggestions for the introduction of American style badges and wallets:

“For plain clothes staff, detective officers in particular, the warrant card could be carried in a leather type holder with a flap for the PSNI badge to be displayed.”

(Respondent 183)

Other General Comments

Comments

The questionnaire gave respondents the opportunity to provide other general comments. Of the 307 respondents, 158 (51 per cent) made constructive comments.

Some respondents reiterated comments made at earlier points in the questionnaire. Thus, of the four general themes that ran throughout the comments, two (satisfaction with the current methods of police identification and the personal security of Police Officers) had arisen previously. Two further themes to emerge were:

- the issue of parity with other police forces; and
- the use of business cards.

A number of respondents reasoned why the police force of Northern Ireland should be required to provide any more detail on identification than other forces in the UK, or indeed further afield:

“The public have numerous ways of identifying Police Officers. Why should a difference be made between ourselves and other services/forces?”

(Respondent 204)

“[I] have worked alongside other UK/European and North American Forces and our officer and fleet identification is far superior to that used by other forces.”

(Respondent 251)

Comments were also made regarding the usefulness of calling cards when dealing with individual members of the public:

“On speaking with the public while dealing with matters they are involved in, I think cards with the officer’s name, rank and number, department and phone number for department should be issued to members of the public.”

(Respondent 88).

Finally, there were a number of comments that did not sit within any of the identified themes but made interesting points or raised awareness of another viewpoint:

“Police vehicles need ‘black boxes’ fitted to assist in tracking and accident investigation etc.”

(Respondent 294)

“Police Officers need to feel comfortable wearing their ID.”

(Respondent 214)

Chapter 5: Focus Group

While the consultation questionnaire provided a good account of the opinions of respondents regarding the current methods of police identification, it was felt that further in-depth information was also required. From the comments provided it is clear that many respondents had little or no knowledge or had never seen a police warrant card or police public order equipment. Consequently, in an effort to enhance and build upon the information derived from the postal consultation exercise, a focus group was organised.

Participants

A letter was sent to twelve randomly selected respondents based in the Belfast and surrounding areas. The letter outlined and reminded them of the consultation exercise, and invited them to participate further in the investigation into police identification. Six of the twelve respondents replied with four agreeing to participate in the focus group.

To increase numbers, respondents based in the Belfast area, not initially selected, were also contacted and invited to participate in the focus group. Four of these respondents accepted the offer.

The focus group took place on 5 November 2004. Four of the eight respondents expected arrived to take part. A staff member from the Office of the Police Ombudsman and a member of Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency staff joined. A member of the Police Service for Northern Ireland involved in the re-design of the current police warrant card also joined. Consequently, a total of seven individuals took part in the focus group.

Procedure

The focus group was conducted in the conference room of the office of the Police Ombudsman at New Cathedral Buildings⁸. A consent form provided information regarding the purpose of the focus group and, once signed, granted permission for the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland to use any of the information gathered. All participants signed and returned their form.

All participants were asked their opinion on the following seven areas: police uniform number, police name badge, police warrant card, police fire retardant overalls, police helmet, police vehicle, police fluorescent coat.

Two Police Officers from the PSNI (one male and one female) modelled the current police uniform, complete with shoulder numbers and name badges. The male officer also modelled the police fluorescent coat, and public order equipment consisting of the police helmet, police fire retardant overalls, police baton and riot shield. The male officer also provided his warrant card as a comparison to the proposed re-designed warrant card, also supplied by the PSNI. Three pictures displaying the current method of identification on police Land Rovers were made available to all participants.

8 11 Church Street, St Anne's Square, Belfast BT1 1PG

Figure 10: Photographs displaying identification on police Land Rovers



Results

The results of the focus group were collated into the seven areas to provide an overall view.

With regards to the police uniform number the focus group highlighted the benefits that members of the public know where to look for the shoulder number and the number is a distinctive part of the police corporate identity. Conversely, the focus group indicated that the shoulder numbers might be difficult to view for people of a small stature or wheelchair bound. The group also suggested that the current size of the number for Inspector and above was too small while the size employed for Police Constables was adequate. The group further highlighted the lack of public understanding and awareness of police identification on a uniform. A member of the group suggested that the rank of Police Officers might best be represented through the use of different coloured shirts.

When discussing the current police name badge the focus group agreed that there was a satisfactory amount of information available, that it is easily seen if you understand where to look, and the use of name badges is a positive step towards normalisation of policing. However, the group also believed that all officers should wear a name badge, there is a lack of public knowledge and awareness regarding police name badges, the badge should have more contrasting colours, it is difficult to see the information on the badge from a distance, and the clasp for the name badge tends to break. The group also discussed the issue of the personal security of officers, particularly the risk encountered by officers involved in criminal investigations who may have a unique surname that can be located within the Northern Ireland phone book.

Chapter 5: Focus Group

With regards to the police warrant card the group was provided with an example of the current design and also a proposed new card. The main differences between the cards were that the officer's date of birth was removed, the force number located to the back of the card, a larger photograph, the displaying of the new police emblem and the word police available in Braille. The group were impressed by the new design, happy with the larger photograph, and encouraged by the inclusion of Braille. However, one member would like the words 'Police Service of Northern Ireland' displayed more clearly, and the group unanimously agreed that Braille should be available for all details displayed on the card.

Figure 11: The PSNI proposed re-design of the police warrant card



Related to the warrant card was the issue of police business cards. It was explained to the group that business cards are available for officer of Inspector rank and above. If, however, an officer below this rank requires business cards they can purchase a set of generic business cards. All members of the group believe that business cards are an acceptable and professional means of providing information to the public. The group indicated that all Police Officers should be issued business cards free of charge.

The group had little to comment on the current identification on the police fire retardant overalls except the same issues as indicated for the shoulder numbers. They did, however, indicate a desire to have the word 'police' displayed on the back of the overalls.

There were no negative comments on the police helmet. The group were satisfied with the inclusion of the secondary identification number to the front of the helmet⁹. The group were also happy with the colour and size of the numbers, and the officer's rank being displayed to the rear of the helmet.

Figure 12: Police helmet identification



With regards to police vehicles, the group were impressed by the distinctive colouring. The group did, however, believe that besides the registration number, all police vehicles should have a unique identification number displayed, where possible, on all sides and the roof. They also indicated that the numbers displayed on police Land Rovers are not big enough.

Finally, the group considered the identification on police fluorescent coats. The group felt that the coats were consistent but also lead to confusion with other emergency services. It was suggested that the coats should be made similar to those of the ambulance service with the green replaced by blue.

⁹ Recommended by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

Chapter 6: Interviews

Background

While making arrangements for the focus group it became apparent that not all respondents who indicated a willingness to participate further in the research could attend on the date or at the location. Therefore, respondents were offered the opportunity of a face to face interview.

Participants

Three respondents accepted the offer of an interview. All three were female and they resided in Aughnacloy, Ballymena, and Strabane.

Police Uniform Identification

Two out of three participants indicated that the current shoulder numbers displayed on the police uniform were too small:

“The numbers displayed on the shoulder should be larger.”

“The current size of the number is too small.”

One participant believed that the numbers are difficult to view while sitting in a car or for an individual of small stature. Another participant preferred the displaying of a name rather than a number:

“Difficult to see if small or sitting in a car.”

“Names are easier to remember than a number.”

Police name badges

The participants had different views regarding the wearing of name badges. These views varied from all officers wearing name badges to excluding the wearing of name badges during public order situation:

“All officers should wear name badges as the community needs to know the name of the officer.”

“The wearing of name badges is important when attending an incident or dealing with the community but is unnecessary during public order situations.”

All participants were satisfied with the size of the current name badge. However, one participant indicated that the font could be improved:

“The size of the name badge is fine but the font could be improved.”

Two participants agreed that the name badge should display just the rank and name of the officer:

“The name badge should have name and rank of the officer with the officer’s name substituted for the number in circumstances where there may be a security issue.”

“I would like to see the name badges displayed but with not too much information, name and rank would be sufficient.”

Warrant Card

None of the participants had seen a police warrant card. A black and white photocopy of a new proposed design of the warrant card was shown to them. It was also explained that the main differences of the new proposed design to the current card were that the officer’s date of birth was removed, the force number located to the back of the card, a larger photograph, the displaying of the new police emblem and the word ‘police’ in Braille.

The participants were encouraged by the new design but preferred to see all the information in Braille:

“The officer’s name and rank should be Braille along with the word police.”

One participant would prefer to see the police number on the front of the card.

The participants all agreed with the removal of date of birth of the officer from the card:

“Do not need date of birth on the card”

Business Cards

Related to the issue of the police warrant card was the use of business cards. All participants felt that the use of business cards was important:

“Business cards are very useful especially within the rural community where an officer can leave contact details.”

“All officers should have business cards as it is important to know who you are dealing with.”

“All officers should have a business card as they are useful as a means of contact for the victims of crime. The use of a business card also displays a more professional image.”

Chapter 6: Interviews

Police Land Rovers

Two participants mentioned that the station of origin or unit should be displayed:

“The displaying of the station of origin would be useful.”

“Details of the DCU on the side may be useful.”

Another participant commented that each Land Rover should have a unique number clearly displayed, as should all police vehicles:

“The number on the Land Rovers should be permanent. The numbers should also be linked to the station as distinct from Tactical Support Unit (TSG) and local police.”

“Although the registration number is available and used to identify a vehicle a unique number would be useful on all sides of the vehicle. Also the name of the station would be useful on vehicles.”

Public Order Equipment

The participants had little knowledge of public order equipment and therefore had little comment to provide. One participant commented that police batons should be identified:

“Batons should have a number unique to the Officer, identical to the shoulder number.”

Florescent Coat

Two participants had comments regarding police florescent coats:

“Fluorescent coats are easy to view from a distance but are too similar to traffic wardens and other services. The word ‘police’ should be displayed larger on the front of the coat.”

“The officer’s name and number should be attached. The police blue on arms to identify them as police and no other service.”

Other issues

Two participants had issues regarding the new uniform:

“The new green jumper is appalling...the uniform is too similar to general security guards.”

“The new uniform is too casual particularly the open-necked shirts, it reduces the professional image of the police.”

One participant mentioned identification on police cycle helmets:

“Police cyclist helmets should display police identification.”

Another participant mentioned police attitude towards victims of crime:

“Police should be more orientated towards the victim of crime.”

Finally, one participant was concerned with the future closure of the local police station:

“The removal of the Police Station will isolate us and put reliance on our nearest station that has little or no knowledge of our local community.”

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

It is encouraging that 27 per cent of participants completed and returned their consultation form. This is a good response rate to a postal survey and is an indication of the importance of the issue of police identification to the public.

The results from the consultation (both postal and website) indicated that the majority of respondents are generally satisfied with the current methods of identification used on police uniforms, equipment, vehicles, and on warrant cards. Few respondents identified problem areas or suggested improvements to the current methods of police identification. In fact, most expressed satisfaction with the current methods of police identification.

Some comments favoured changes to the current methods of police identification. The most noteworthy of these were around the lack of public knowledge of identification associated with police equipment, vehicles and warrant cards. From this consultation it was evident that besides numbers on the epaulette of police uniforms some members of the public had little knowledge of how a Police Officer can be identified. Many respondents had never seen a warrant card or were unlikely to be in a situation to view the police equipment. With regards to the police vehicle, respondents were aware of the registration number but had no knowledge of any other identification. They were also concerned with the number of unmarked cars in their local areas.

Respondents also provided comments regarding the design and location of police identification. With regards to the police uniform, respondents indicated that the numerals on the epaulettes are too small and difficult to remember. Respondents also indicated a preference for name badges worn on or above the breast pocket of the police uniform and that all equipment should have individual officer identification. Some respondents also mentioned that police identification on both the uniform and equipment is on occasion obscured either accidentally or, more worryingly, on purpose.

A number of respondents mentioned the problems associated with police identification for people with disabilities. The use of epaulette numbers was viewed as problematic for people in wheel chairs and those of smaller stature and added further to the benefits of a name badge. The design of warrant cards was also problematic for those with disabilities and there was a suggestion that Braille versions would be useful. Some respondents also suggested the use of business cards.

Many of the issues previously mentioned from the consultation forms and the focus group were repeated during the interviews.

The police consultation was extremely useful in providing an overview of the issues around identification from the point of view of those who use the various methods. The response rate of 31 per cent to the postal consultation demonstrates that officers are keen to actively participate in and contribute to Police Ombudsman policy and practice investigations.

The issue of personal security is clearly a priority for officers and their families and this must be considered in all recommendations made. A number of useful and practicable suggestions were also made and were considered in the formulation of recommendations arising from the investigative research.

Recommendations

The Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland makes the following recommendations regarding police identification:

- PSNI policy on the wearing of name badges should be annually reviewed in light of the prevailing security situation and the Chief Constable should set a target date by which it will be compulsory for all officers to display name identification badges;
- in the absence of name badges, breast pocket numeral identification should be introduced;
- police personal issue equipment, including radios, CS spray, batons, firearms and handcuffs, should be uniquely linked to individual officers;
- police vehicles should have unique identifiers permanently in view on the sides and on the roof. These should be removed only with the authority of an officer of Superintendent rank or above;
- the prevailing method of officer identification should be clearly marked on police fluorescent coats;
- the sleeves and trim of fluorescent coats should be changed to police blue to clearly distinguish police from other emergency services;
- the use of business cards by officers should be promoted and encouraged;
- the PSNI should produce and disseminate a leaflet detailing all means used by the police to identify themselves;
- the clarity of epaulette numerals should be improved; and
- warrant cards should be redesigned to facilitate persons with visual disability.

The Police Ombudsman made the PSNI aware of the above recommendations prior to publication of the report. The Deputy Chief Constable indicated the following responses to those recommendations:

- that there will be an annual review of the wearing of name badges, with the default position being that name badges should be worn. Only the current security situation will be grounds for not wearing a name badge. The PSNI is also examining how best to identify plain clothes officers;
- that an officer's station and epaulette number should be worn when the wearing of a name badge is not possible;

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

- it was agreed that police personal issue equipment should be uniquely linked to individual officers. CS spray is the only item listed not on personal issue at this time;
- that all police vehicles have permanently fixed vehicle registration plates at the front and rear. All current Battenburg livery vehicles will shortly have thermal image (5 digit) fleet number permanently fixed on the roof for air support identification during day and night time. Height 30.5cm, width 21.5 cm, thickness 5cm. With regard to the sides of all Battenburg vehicles and the sides of all Battenburg motorcycles, as an extension of the PSNI email address currently on the vehicles on blue against white/silver background, they can fix the 5 digit fleet number to height 3.5cm, width 2.5cm, thickness 1.5cm. The timeframe for completion is August 2005. In addition, ALRs will be able to have unique TSG operational numbers for whatever type of operation undertaken. All unmarked police vehicles are excluded from this process;
- it was agreed that the prevailing method of officer identification should be clearly marked on police fluorescent coats;
- it was not agreed that the sleeves and trim of fluorescent coats should be changed to police blue to clearly distinguish police from other emergency services. 'Police' appears on large fluorescent letters on the front and rear of these coats. The PSNI is not persuaded that the cost to make such a change is justified, given what they consider to be questionable benefits;
- it was agreed that the use of business cards by officers should be promoted and encouraged;
- rather than leaflets detailing all means used by the police to identify themselves, they felt that posters that could be displayed giving this information would be more effective;
- work has already begun on improving the clarity of epaulette numbers and the PSNI is prepared to discuss this issue further; and
- second generation warrant cards are now on issue and have Braille text.

Annex 1: Benchmarking of Methods of Police Identification Used by UK Police Services

Many of the other UK services employ similar methods of police identification. Along with the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland), two Welsh and eight English services provided information with regard to their method of police identification (see Table A1). All of these services and the PSNI require the majority of their Police Officers to wear a uniform with an identification number and rank insignia displayed on an epaulette.

There are different procedures between the services with regard to the wearing of name badges. Most of the services provide all officers with name badges, except for the PSNI, where name badges are only issued to members of the Neighbourhood Patrol Teams and officers of Inspector rank and above. The wearing of name badges is not mandatory, but encouraged. However, officers in Gwent (Wales) are not required to wear the name badge when dealing with members of the public and in Devon and Cornwall name badges are not shown in operational situations or on general patrol. The name badges for all services show name and rank. One Scottish service displays their logo. The Metropolitan Police have the initials MSC before the officer's name, and the PSNI also include details of the officer's department. For one Scottish force the badge is made of leather. A Velcro style badge is used by the Metropolitan Police while for the PSNI, a plastic badge with a rear pin is employed.

All officers are issued with a warrant card. The information on the warrant is similar for all services and includes a photograph with the officer's name, rank, department, force number and the force logo. One Scottish force has their logo as a holographic image.

The marking on public order equipment varies between the services. The force badge or word POLICE along with rank insignia is displayed on the helmet. The PSNI display the officer's number twice on the front of their public order helmets. The identification used for batons, handcuffs, radios and torches varies and either has unique numbers recorded against individual officers or a serial number. CS Spray canisters all have serial numbers.

All police cars are clearly identified through various livery colours and their registration numbers. Most services have their corporate logo on the bonnet and sides and a unique number on the roof of the vehicle. Lancashire Police have the word POLICE or CRIMESTOPPERS displayed at the sides of their vehicles. Devon and Cornwall Police display their website address. The PSNI Land Rovers display a unique number on all sides to identify TSG Groups during public order situations.

Annex 1: Benchmarking of Methods of Police Identification Used by UK Police Services

Table A1: Methods of identification used by a sample of UK Police Services

Police Service	Uniform Identification	Name Badge
Police Service of Northern Ireland	Insignia and Number on Epaulettes	Worn by Neighbourhood Policing Teams and Officers of Inspector Rank and above. Displays name, rank and DCU/Department.
Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland)	All officers including Special Constables wear epaulettes with Service number and rank.	One Service issues officers with leather badges displaying the Service corporate logo with officer's name and rank. The wearing of these is not mandatory.
North Wales Police	Uniformed officers have embroidered shoulder numbers and rank.	Officers are issued with name badges.
Gwent Police	Officers display their rank and identification number on epaulettes.	Officers are issued with name badges. It is policy to wear these whilst in police buildings. It is not mandatory to wear these when dealing with members of the public.
West Midlands Police	Officers display their rank on epaulettes. Only Constables and Sergeants display identification numbers on their epaulettes.	Name badges are issued to all officers but it is not mandatory that they be worn. Name badges show name and rank.
Lancashire Police	Only Constables and Sergeants display identification numbers on their epaulettes.	Wearing of name badges is encouraged but not compulsory. They show first name, surname and rank.
Cheshire Police	Officers display their identification number on epaulettes.	Name badges are issued to all officers but it is not mandatory that they be worn. Name badges show name and rank.

Warrant Card	Public Order Equipment	Police Vehicles
<p>Current version contains a photograph, Police marking, name, rank, service number, date of birth and PSNI Insignia.</p> <p>Proposed new version has Police marking with underlying Braille, name, rank, service number on back, no date-of-birth and new PSNI Insignia. The photograph is also larger.</p>	<p>Serial number displayed in two locations along with PSNI Insignia, Public Order Uniform displays rank and identification number. Riot shield has Police Marking. Batons are numbered but not unique to the officer. Fluorescent coats have Police Markings on front and back with blue and white check trim along the bottom.</p>	<p>Police markings with livery colours. Sirens and blue flashing lights. Registration number. Land Rovers have removable numbers for use during Public Order situations and registration number.</p>
<p>All officers issued with a warrant card comprising of name, rank, photograph and Service logo. One Service has the logo as a holographic image.</p>	<p>Batons and handcuffs have unique number recorded against individual officers. CS Spray is serialised by the manufacturer on a tamper proof label.</p>	<p>Liveried with Scottish Police Badge on the side. Most Services have their corporate logo either on the bonnet or doors.</p>
<p>Officers have and use warrant cards. Warrant cardholders are serial numbered.</p>	<p>Body armour is serial numbered. Torches are engraved with officer identification numbers. Pava spray, batons, speed cuffs and radios are serial numbered. Public Order Helmets have POLICE marking (front and back), division lettering, rank insignia and a mutual aid call sign (front and back).</p>	<p>Livery colours, a Service crest on the driver and passenger doors. A 'Dyna Dygion' octagon on both rear doors and on the bonnet of the vehicle.</p>
<p>Officers have and use warrant cards.</p>	<p>Personal protection and the new Airwave Radios are uniquely identifiable.</p>	<p>Most patrol vehicles have Police Livery and are identifiable by registration.</p>
<p>Warrant cards show the Service crest, name, rank, identification number and a photograph of the officer. The card is held in a black leather wallet that contains a metal Service crest.</p>	<p>Public Order Helmets have markings that indicate the Service area and rank of the officer.</p>	<p>Livery with Service crest on the driver and passenger doors. Marked vehicles are also identifiable by roof markings with each vehicle having a letter that indicates the force to which the vehicle belongs and a number that indicates the command unit.</p>
<p>Warrant card shows the officer's full name, rank, photograph, the Service badge, date of issue and the word POLICE in Braille.</p>	<p>Officers' numbers are engraved on batons and handcuffs. Helmets have the Service badge plate displayed on them.</p>	<p>Livery with POLICE or CRIMESTOPPERS displayed.</p>
<p>All officers carry a warrant card. Details of rank and Service identification number.</p>	<p>Equipment is generally not marked. Batons and handcuffs are issued on a personal basis to individuals. The issue of CS Spray is documented through a booking out procedure using a unique reference number for each canister. The rear of the PSU helmets are marked to identify the officer's force.</p>	<p>Registration number. Marked police vehicles have roof markings that denote the force, function for which the vehicle is being used and a unique identification mark for the particular vehicle.</p>

Annex 1: Benchmarking of Methods of Police Identification Used by UK Police Services

Table A1: Methods of identification used by a sample of UK Police Services (continued)

Police Service	Uniform Identification	Name Badge
Metropolitan Police	Constables and Sergeants display the identification letters of their unit/station codes and their personal identification number on epaulettes.	Velcro type name badges displaying officer's rank, surname. Metropolitan Special Constables additionally have the initial, MSC following their rank and before their surname. There are no general exemptions to the wearing of a name badge but provisions are made in exceptional circumstances.
Hertfordshire Police	Federation Police Ranks, Specials and Police Community Support Officers show their warrant numbers on their epaulettes.	No information.
Devon and Cornwall Police	Officers display their identification number on epaulettes, which also show rank.	Name badges are issued to all employees as standard and policy states that they should be worn at all times when representing the Service but not in operational situations or on general patrol.
City of London Police	Officers display identification numbers and rank on epaulettes. The peculiarity of the City of London is that these are gold in colour.	All officers and civilian staff are issued with name badges. The wearing of name badges is encouraged but it is not mandatory.
Cleveland Police	Officers display rank on epaulettes.	Officers are issued with name badges.

Warrant Card	Public Order Equipment	Police Vehicles
Metropolitan Police warrant cards display the Service crest logo, the officer's name, photograph and warrant card.	Items of police equipment such as body armour, batons, handcuffs, CS Spray and warrant cardholders all carry serial numbers allowing an audit trail.	Livery with POLICE affixed to the bonnet and rear vertical face of all marked vehicles and additionally along the side of pursuit vehicles. All vehicles are identifiable by a five-digit code referred to as a fleet number. In addition to the fleet number, marked operational vehicles are identified with a two or three digit code referred to as the Aerial identification mark.
All officers and support staff are issued with a warrant card/identity card.	CS Spray, batons and handcuffs are serial numbered and recorded.	Sixty-six of fleet has POLICE livery.
A warrant card is issued to all officers. A Service photograph ID card is issued to all employees.	No information.	Battenburg Livery with POLICE, Service crest and website address.
All officers carry warrant cards in a warrant cardholder that has the City of London Police Crest on the front.	No information.	Vehicles marked in accordance with Home Office Guidelines.
Officers are issued with and carry warrant cards.	There are POLICE markings on body armour and helmets.	Vehicles display livery and are fitted with light bars.

Appendix A: Covering Letter

Dear,

POLICE IDENTIFICATION CONSULTATION

The Office of the Police Ombudsman is undertaking an investigation into current police policy and practice in relation to the display of identification on

- Police Officer uniforms; and
- police equipment / vehicles

As part of its consultation programme, the Police Ombudsman is seeking views, experiences and comments in respect of this issue. Consequently, I would be very grateful if you or a nominee would take a few minutes to complete and return the attached consultation form in the pre-paid envelope provided.

I can assure you that all responses to the consultation form will be treated in the strictest confidence.

It would be helpful if you would return the form by 31 July 2004.

Should you have any questions about the consultation form or should you require further information please contact Ian Craig, Research Officer at 028 9082 8616 or myself at 028 9082 8648.

Yours sincerely,

Greg Mullan
Director of Policy and Practice

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Appendix B: Consultation Form

POLICE OMBUDSMAN CONSULTATION

IN CONFIDENCE

There is a number of possible ways to identify Police Officers:

BY SHOULDER NUMBER ON UNIFORM

BY NAME BADGE

BY WARRANT CARD

BY NUMERICAL IDENTIFICATION ON EQUIPMENT E.G. POLICE HELMETS
DURING PUBLIC ORDER SITUATIONS

BY SERIAL NUMBERS DISPLAYED ON VEHICLES

1. DO YOU CONSIDER THAT THE CURRENT METHOD OF POLICE OFFICER UNIFORM IDENTIFICATION IS?

Please tick the appropriate box and provide any comments you may have.

SATISFACTORY <input type="checkbox"/>	COMMENTS:
NOT SATISFACTORY <input type="checkbox"/>	
OTHER <input type="checkbox"/>	

2. DO YOU CONSIDER THAT THE CURRENT METHOD OF POLICE OFFICER IDENTIFICATION ON EQUIPMENT IS?

Please tick the appropriate box and provide any comments you may have.

SATISFACTORY <input type="checkbox"/>	COMMENTS:
NOT SATISFACTORY <input type="checkbox"/>	
OTHER <input type="checkbox"/>	

Appendix B: Consultation Form

3. DO YOU CONSIDER THAT THE CURRENT METHOD OF POLICE IDENTIFICATION BY MEANS OF A WARRANT CARD IS?

Please tick the appropriate box and provide any comments you may have.

SATISFACTORY <input type="checkbox"/>	COMMENTS:
NOT SATISFACTORY <input type="checkbox"/>	
OTHER <input type="checkbox"/>	

4. DO YOU CONSIDER THAT THE CURRENT METHOD OF POLICE VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION IS?

Please tick the appropriate box and provide any comments you may have.

SATISFACTORY <input type="checkbox"/>	COMMENTS:
NOT SATISFACTORY <input type="checkbox"/>	
OTHER <input type="checkbox"/>	

5. WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, ARE THE PROBLEM AREAS ASSOCIATED WITH POLICE IDENTIFICATION?

Please provide any comments.

COMMENTS:

6. HOW DO YOU THINK THE CURRENT METHODS OF POLICE IDENTIFICATION MIGHT BE IMPROVED?

Please provide any comments.

COMMENTS:

7. PLEASE PROVIDE ANY OTHER GENERAL COMMENTS.

COMMENTS:

Appendix B: Consultation Form

8. THE OFFICE OF THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN MAY WISH TO CONDUCT FURTHER INVESTIGATION IN RELATION TO THE ISSUE OF POLICE IDENTIFICATION. WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE?

Please tick the appropriate box.

YES

NO

☐☐

IF YES, HOW WOULD YOU WISH TO BE CONTACTED?

Please provide contact details e.g. telephone number, address details.

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS CONSULTATION EXERCISE

Appendix C: Reminder Letter

Dear,

POLICE IDENTIFICATION CONSULTATION

The Office of the Police Ombudsman is undertaking an investigation into current police policy and practice in relation to the display of identification on:

- Police Officer uniforms; and
- Police equipment / vehicles

As part of its consultation programme, the Police Ombudsman is seeking views, experiences and comments in respect of this issue. Consequently, I would be very grateful if you or a nominee would take a few minutes to complete and return the attached consultation form in the pre-paid envelope provided.

You may have already received a form. In case you did not receive it I have enclosed another, and I should be grateful if you would take the time to complete it and return it in the reply-paid envelope provided.

If you have already completed and returned a form, please accept my apologies.

I can assure you that all responses to the consultation form will be treated in the strictest confidence.

It would be helpful if you would return the form by 31 July 2004.

Should you have any questions about the consultation form or should you require further information please contact Ian Craig, Research Officer at 028 9082 8616 or myself at 028 9082 8648.

Yours sincerely,

Greg Mullan
Director of Policy and Practice

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Appendix D: Location of Respondents - Public Survey

Table 1: PSNI region and DCU location of participants and respondents

Region	DCU	Respondents Freq.	per cent	Participants Freq.	per cent
Urban Region	Belfast (North, East, South, and West)	54	38	228	41
	Antrim	1	1	1	0
	Ards	1	1	2	0
	Carrickfergus	1	1	1	0
	Castlereagh	0	0	1	0
	Larne	12	8	31	6
	Lisburn	1	1	2	0
	Newtownabbey	2	1	2	0
	North Down	1	1	2	0
	Sub total	73	51	270	48
Rural Region	Armagh	0	0	4	1
	Ballymena	7	5	20	4
	Ballymoney	1	1	1	0
	Banbridge	2	1	2	0
	Coleraine	1	1	4	1
	Cookstown	1	1	3	1
	Craigavon	2	1	5	1
	Down	7	5	27	5
	Dungannon	17	12	54	10
	Foyle	6	4	38	7
	Fermanagh	6	4	15	3
	Limavady	5	3	18	3
	Magherafelt	4	3	25	4
	Moyle	1	1	3	1
	Newry and Mourne	7	5	64	11
	Omagh	1	1	4	1
	Strabane	1	1	1	0
	Sub total	69	48	288	51
Outside NI		1	1	3	1
Total		143	100	561	100



Additional copies of this and other publications are available from:

Policy and Practice Directorate
Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
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