

Guidance for Police Attendance and Participation at Publicly Arranged Community Events

The National Police Chiefs' Council with the College of Policing has agreed to these guidelines being circulated to, and adopted by, police forces in England, Wales & Northern Ireland.

It is NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED under the Government Protective Marking Scheme and any referrals for advice and rationale in relation to Freedom of Information Act disclosure should be made to the NPCC Central Referral Unit at npcc.request@foi.pnn.police.uk.

Document information

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These guidelines have been produced and approved by the **DEI Committee**. The implementation of all guidance will require operational choices to be made at local level in order to achieve the appropriate police response. It will be updated and re-published as necessary.

Any queries relating to this document should be directed to either the author detailed above or the NPCC Business Support team.

Purpose of this Guidance

This guidance has been developed to support consistent and impartial decision-making when considering attendance and participation at publicly arranged community events where extra consideration is required on matters relating to the police duty of impartiality. Formal assessment is not required for all community events and should be limited to events that present indicators of being potentially contentious, or where impartiality considerations may reasonably arise.

The guidance reinforces the police duty of impartiality, a core principle under the Police Regulations and Code of Ethics. All decisions about attendance and participation at community events must uphold this duty to maintain public confidence and the integrity of policing.

The guidance presents a range of considerations to aid decision makers. It does not seek to restrict attendance at events rather it is focused on ensuring that attendance is in line with the Police Duty of Impartiality and the Code of Ethics and provides points to consider to enable consistent decision making.

Background

This guidance has been developed in response to Recommendation 5 of the HMICFRS Activism and Impartiality Review 2024.

Recommendation 5

By 31 July 2025, the National Police Chiefs' Council should publish national guidance for forces in relation to officers and staff attending and participating at community events. This should include guidance on:

- the decision about attendance at or absence from the event;
- communication with the public and the workforce about the reasons for attendance at or absence from the event;
- the dress code for those attending;
- the conduct of those attending; and
- whether attendance is on or off duty.

The College of Policing should reflect this guidance within the relevant authorised professional practice.

Community Engagement and Impartiality

Impartiality strengthens police legitimacy and supports ethical decision-making. Police officers must maintain impartiality in all aspects of their professional conduct. In accordance with the Police Regulations 2003, officers are required to refrain from any activity that could compromise, or appear to compromise, the impartial execution of their duties. This principle ensures that policing is carried out without bias, favouritism, or undue influence, thereby safeguarding public confidence and upholding the integrity of the service. Adherence to this standard is essential for promoting fairness, transparency, and trust between the police and the communities they serve.

Police engagement with the communities we serve is a vital part of building public trust, enhancing legitimacy, and fostering confidence in policing. This supports [our vision](#) to be the most trusted and engaged policing service in the world, working together to make communities safer and stronger. For those from underrepresented or historically marginalised groups engagement helps break down barriers, challenge negative perceptions and understand the diverse needs of communities to inform local priority setting and promote inclusion. These efforts align with the principles of the Public Sector Equality Duty, which requires public bodies to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different groups

Scope of Events

This guidance applies specifically to publicly organised events that are, or could reasonably be perceived as, politically sensitive and to on-duty attendance at such events.

Politically sensitive or potentially contentious events may include:

- Events with a known or likely political, activist, or advocacy component.
- Events where community tensions, divergent viewpoints, or prior complaints indicate a risk to impartiality.
- Events where police attendance could reasonably be interpreted as supporting or opposing a cause, organisation, or policy issue.

The guidance also applies to off-duty attendance where there is any visible association with, or indication of affiliation to, the police service or force. It does not apply to off-duty attendance where there is no visible association or indication of affiliation with the police (notwithstanding the fact that any off-duty conduct is still subject to requirements within the Code of Ethics).

It does not apply to police organised events or national staff networks events where there are no concerns in respect of impartiality.

Decision-Making Guidance for Attendance

When considering if officers and staff should attend a potentially contentious publicly organised community event, a suitably selected or positioned officer or member of police staff (relative to size and scale of the event) should assess the appropriateness of attendance using the following considerations to help inform their decision making. Decisions should be made following engagement with community engagement teams, public order command, staff networks, Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs), event organisers, and other relevant stakeholders or

subject matter experts as appropriate ensuring that decisions are contextually informed and consistent.

Due regard must be made in compliance with the Equality Act 2010, including avoiding discrimination, harassment or victimisation and fulfilling the Public Sector Equality Duty. Completing an Equality Impact Assessment/Community Impact Assessment is advised.

Answering 'Yes' or 'No' to any of the following questions may not in itself determine whether attendance is appropriate; but provides considerations that support evidence based decision-making and highlight factors to be taken into account in reaching an informed decision.

Consideration	Key Questions
Purpose	Is the police presence for public order/public safety, engagement, or both?
Impartiality	Could police attendance or participation in the event impact on the public's confidence in police impartiality?
Political Sensitivity	Is the event political or linked to advocacy for legal or policy change?
Historical Context	<p>Consider the historical context of the event to ensure that police attendance or participation does not compromise impartiality or public confidence.</p> <p>When considering the historical or political aspects of an event, decision-makers should recognise that many community events—including Pride, Black History Month, faith or cultural festivals—may contain a mixture of celebratory, cultural, and advocacy elements.</p> <p>The presence of historical political components within some parts of an event does not, on its own, make police attendance inappropriate. Assessments should consider the overall purpose of the event, the policing purpose for attendance, the legitimate opportunities for engagement, and whether attendance can be undertaken in a way that maintains impartiality.</p>

Risk of Perception	<p>Are there any risks of protest or persons with differing views coming together for protest purposes?</p> <p>Could attendance hinder impartial engagement with other groups?</p>
Community Impact	<p>Will attendance enhance trust and legitimacy in our communities?</p>

All decisions must be:

- Documented with a clear and evidenced rationale.
- Developed in engagement with relevant stakeholders and subject matter experts
- Communicated internally and externally, where appropriate for example in any wider communications the force is doing about the event.
- Supported by briefing materials that explain the purpose of attendance or non-attendance.

Expected conduct and standards where attendance occurs

Where attendance is authorised, the following standards must be upheld:

Uniform and Identification

- Officers and staff attending on duty must follow force uniform policies.
- Officers and staff attending whilst off-duty in a personal capacity should have clear guidelines in respect of displaying any visible association with the police.
- Volunteers and cadets must adhere to uniform guidance when representing the service.

Symbolism and Visibility

- No visible symbols (e.g. flags, badges, pins) that could reasonably be interpreted as expressing support for a political party, campaign, or policy change Forces must have clear, consistently enforced policies on visible identifiers.

Stands and merchandise

- Only use engagement and recruitment materials with clear rationale and justification
- Ensure all materials are impartial
- Police vehicles must remain free of symbols that could be interpreted as expressing political affiliation or advocacy

Professional Conduct

- All personnel must act in accordance with the **College of Policing's Code of Ethics**.
- Conduct must uphold the integrity of the service and maintain public confidence.

Pre-Event Briefing for On-Duty Officers and Staff

All attendees must be briefed on:

- Expected standards of behaviour
- Risk assessment outcomes
- Communication protocols
- Contingency arrangements (e.g. withdrawal or escalation)

Definitions

While there is no authoritative definition of the terms “contested” or “politicised” for the purposes of this guidance we have adopted them as defined in the HMICFRS Activism and Impartiality Review 2024.

Contested

Claiming something is wrong or unfair and trying to change it.

Politicised

Making something political or the subject of political debate, commentary or policy.

Impartiality

The HMICFRS Activism and Impartiality Review 2024 defines impartiality as:
Favouring neither side in a dispute or argument.

Police Regulations 2003, Schedule 1 states:

A member of a police force shall at all times abstain from any activity which is likely to interfere with the impartial discharge of his duties or which is likely to give rise to the impression amongst members of the public that it may so interfere; and in particular a member of a police force shall not take any active part in politics.