

# Body Armour Policy (only)

**OFFICIAL**

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<b>Department of Origin</b>	Matrix
<b>Policy Holder</b>	Ch Supt Head of Matrix
<b>Policy Author</b>	Chief Insp Firearms (Matrix)
<b>Related Information</b>	<a href="#">Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 – legislation explained (hse.gov.uk)</a> <a href="#">Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at Work Regulations 1992</a> <a href="#">Police (Health and Safety) Act 1997</a> <a href="#">Police (Health and Safety) Regulations 1999</a> <a href="#">The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999</a> <a href="#">Merseyside Police Risk Assessment Guide for Managers</a> <a href="#">Merseyside Police Personal Protective Equipment PPE Guidance</a>
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# Policy

## National Context

[Authorised Professional Practice](#) (APP) is produced by the College of Policing as the official source of professional practice on policing. All officers and staff are expected to have regard to APP in discharging their responsibilities. Essentially, our “policy” is to comply with APP as it develops to cover all areas of policing.

## Statement

This policy aims to minimise the risk of injury to Police Officers, Special Constables, Police Community Support Officers and Police Staff from edged weapons or firearms, through the provision and wearing of personal issue body armour, whilst engaged in their operational or contractual duties. The Force will issue body armour, which provides the level of protection to the standard approved for the specific role. The standard will be determined by a role-based risk assessment.

Merseyside Police has a statutory responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the risks to staff are managed and controlled. This statutory responsibility is further enhanced by the requirements of the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 1992, to provide personal protective equipment where risks cannot be adequately controlled by other means.

Body armour is designed to protect the vital organs but cannot offer complete protection. It is essential that staff continue to undertake specific task risk assessments and, where appropriate, dynamic risk assessments to aid the decision-making process, enabling the most appropriate course of action to minimise the risks to personal safety.

The Police (Health and Safety) Act 1997 creates offences that may result in criminal proceedings being brought against the Chief Constable or individual officers and employees for any breach of such legislation. Managers, Supervisors and all Officers and Staff therefore have a statutory duty to ensure that body armour is worn and maintained in accordance with this policy, orders and instructions.

For the purpose of this policy, body armour issued to non-Authorised Firearms Officer (AFO) uniform roles will be regarded as General-purpose Body Armour. Body armour issued to AFO's will be regarded as Ballistic Body Armour. Body armour that is worn covertly or by RPU motorcycle officers will be regarded as Covert Body Armour

## Aims

The main aim of this policy is to ensure that all officers understand their duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the risks to staff are managed and controlled.

The policy is underpinned by procedure that provides clear and unambiguous direction for all Merseyside Police personnel who are or should be issued with body armour due to their forward-facing roles.

## Objectives

- a) Minimise the risk of injury to Merseyside Police officers and Staff during operational deployments and policing activities.
- b) Ensure compliance with Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

## Application and Scope

All police officers and police staff, including the extended police family and those working voluntarily or under contract to Merseyside Police must be aware of, and are required to comply with, all relevant policy and associated procedures.

This is a non-statutory policy that sets out the principles to help guide decision making. It provides guidance that, on occasions, officers and staff may depart from based on the particular circumstances they encounter. On such occasions, officers and staff will be supported provided they can demonstrate a clear rationale which can be objectively justified for why they have departed from the policy.

## Outcome Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually and any necessary amendments made. The effectiveness of this Policy will be reviewed at the Quarterly at the Force Uniform Committee where Procurement, Federation, Equipment Officers, Health and Safety, Academy, Management leads can discuss and review.

An agenda item featured will be Body Armour, where any issues, Health and Safety reports or governing policy can be discussed, and the policy revisited, and further instructions or control measures issued to all staff.

Evaluation metrics will be provided by the managerial leads who will provide feedback to the uniform committee and the Health Safety team who will provide incidents recorded on the Oshens Health and Safety system.

# Procedure

## Version History

Version Number	Date	Detailed rational behind amending/updating policy or procedure.	Policy Owner Details	Policy Author Details
1.0	00/01/17	Initial approved version – T/Insp Rooney (MSOC)		
1.1	00/05/20	Policy Review and Minor amendments in line with changes in terminology only.		
1.2	00/02/22 (unpublished)	General revision of formatting and provision of hyperlinks in Related Information	Ch. Supt. Jonathan Davies	Ch. Insp. Andy Rankine
1.3	00/02/22	General revision of formatting and provision of hyperlinks in Related Information and Outcome Evaluation	Ch. Supt. Jonathan Davies	Ch. Insp. Dave Ambrose
1.4	01/03/24	General review. Changes to terminology in line with CFOR changes.	Ch. Supt. Jonathan Davies	Supt Colin Rooney
1.5	12/06/26	Updated to reflect new organisational structure only; transfer to current force policy template (no change to review date)	Ch/Supt. Matrix	Ch/Insp. Firearms

## 1. Responsibilities

- 1.1. It is the responsibility of individual officers and staff to comply with this policy and to wear body armour as directed
- 1.2. It is the responsibility of individual officers and staff to ensure the proper care and maintenance of body armour issued to them.
- 1.3. Supervisors are responsible for monitoring the wearing of body armour and compliance with this policy.

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- 1.4. Supervisors are responsible for carrying out risk assessments in relation to the wearing of body armour when tasking their staff with operational duties / tasks.
  - 1.5. Body armour purchases will be managed by the Procurement Unit.

## 2. Guidance

- 2.1. Body armour is classed as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and as such legislation and regulations relevant to PPE must be complied with.
- 2.2. General Purpose body armour must be worn at all times by those officers and Police Staff in operational roles that require contact with the public and/or who are deployable as a Force resource, unless a risk assessment for a specific task or activity has been carried out and it has been deemed that the wearing of body armour is not required or necessary, or to do so would deem that task unachievable or cause unnecessary risk of harm or injury. The decision to not wear body armour must be documented. This should be a simple, non-bureaucratic process that allows for dynamic risk assessment. Officers may use their discretion and must record their rationale in their notebooks / daybooks / hand-held.
- 2.3. Centralised Crime officers engaged in operational duties that have the potential for confrontation (arrests, warrants etc) must wear body armour unless a specific risk assessment has been carried out to safely negate the wearing of armour. Covert covers for use with standard body armour panels may be issued where the role risk assessment deems such equipment necessary. Where there is an identified risk of harm by a subject, then consideration should be given to utilising appropriately trained uniformed officers.
- 2.4. Operational Officers and staff who are required to operate in plain clothes may have access to covert covers if the role risk assessment dictates. These must be worn unless a specific risk assessment has been carried out and the wearing of body armour has been deemed unnecessary.
- 2.5. Surveillance officers and staff may have access to general purpose body armour, covert body armour covers and/or ballistic only body armour, dependent upon their role. Each task must be risk assessed to determine whether body armour is required to be worn, and which type/standard is appropriate to the task and risks officers will be exposed to. Supervisors and officers must ensure all those involved are wearing the correct body armour. Body armour may not be required to be worn where the safety of an officer could be significantly compromised if the wearing or the body armour may lead to their identity being revealed. Where this is the case the justification for not wearing body armour must be recorded within the task risk assessment. Alternative control measures must be highlighted in the specific task risk assessment to manage this risk.

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- 2.6. Matrix Disruption Officers will be issued with body armour that affords a higher knife protection and can be fitted with additional neck protection. Body armour must be worn at all times whilst on operational duties and the additional neck protection must be worn when the risk assessment for the task being performed requires this.
  - 2.7. Authorised Firearms Officers conducting Armed Response Vehicle duties will wear ballistic only body armour at all times when engaged operationally and will wear additional high velocity plates where the risk assessment for the task highlights the need.
  - 2.8. Authorised Firearms Officers conducting Discreet Armed Response Vehicle duties will wear ballistic only body armour at all times when engaged operationally and will wear additional high velocity plates where the risk assessment for the task highlights the need.
  - 2.9. Specialist Firearms Officers (including Close Protection and Rifle Officers) will wear the appropriately issued body armour unless a specific risk assessment has been carried out and the risk to the officers, as a result of their identity being compromised by wearing armour, outweighs the risk of not wearing it. Each deployment or operation must be risk assessed, and decisions made regarding body armour will be recorded by the OFC, Tactical Advisor and TFC.
  - 2.10. Force Negotiators will be issued and wear ballistic body armour when performing their operational negotiating role. This level of protection reflects the similar proximity to firearms threats as firearms officers when negotiating. These must be worn unless a specific risk assessment has been carried out and the wearing of body armour has been deemed unnecessary.
  - 2.11. Due to the different protective properties of various armour types, all officers and staff must wear the correct body armour type dependant on their role. Officers who have transferred into Merseyside from another Force will be issued with Merseyside Police body armour and must not wear other types. Privately obtained body armour will not be permitted.
  - 2.12. All Police Officers, Staff and Supervisors have a responsibility to ensure that all staff on patrol or deployed to a specific incident are in possession / wearing their Body Armour and PPE in accordance with this policy. Any breaches, near misses, accidents or perceived gaps in the use of personal issue Body Armour must be reported in line with current legislation and this policy.
  - 2.13. Officers attending Personal Safety Training will bring their issued Body Armour and PPE to wear during the training program to ensure suitability for role, fit and protection level. Any issues to be reported to an equipment officer and or procurement team.

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### 3. Welfare

- 3.1. The body armour incorporates the latest technological developments to ensure maximum possible comfort whilst being worn. Wearers, however, should take advantage of opportunities, such as during breaks or when report writing in police stations, to remove the armour.
- 3.2. During hot weather or long periods of deployment, officers and staff are advised to ensure they stay hydrated and take rest periods when the opportunity arises.
- 3.3. Managers and supervisors responsible for planning special events and operations shall ensure that adequate provision is made for the welfare of all deployed officers and staff.
- 3.4. Individuals who experience any medical problems related to, or compounded by, the wearing of body armour, must inform their line manager at the earliest opportunity and seek medical advice and an OHU referral where appropriate.
- 3.5. Individuals experiencing issues with the fitting and comfort of their body armour must seek advice from their equipment officers and / or procurement, who will advise on correcting fitting issues.

### 4. Maintenance

- 4.1. The PPE Regulation place a duty on all officers and staff issued with body armour, to regularly examine it and report faults to their equipment officers. The protection properties of body armour will be reduced through:
  - Incorrect fitting of panels
  - Incorrect adjustment
  - Continued use after having sustained damage
  - Mistreatment of covers and armour panels.
  - Incorrect storage
- 4.2. All officers and staff issued with body armour are responsible for ensuring that it is cleaned and maintained in accordance with the instruction labels on the plates and covers.
- 4.3. Body armour must be stored in a manner that will not affect its integrity or performance. Ideally it should be hung up, stood up or laid flat, with nothing heavy placed on top of it.
- 4.4. Following any incident that may affect the integrity of the body armour (weapons, road collisions or impact) the armour must be inspected and reported to an equipment officer and or procurement team. Out of hours, officers and staff must report this matter directly to their line manager if they have concerns over the integrity of their armour.

- 4.5. Disposal of old body armour must be conducted by an equipment officer and or procurement team after examination. All officer/supervisors must ensure that old body armour is handed in to an equipment officer and or procurement team to ensure appropriate disposal method.

## 5. Incident Reporting

- 5.1. The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) set the standards for UK Police issue body armour and seeks feedback from forces on the performance and effectiveness of police issue body armour. This extends to occasions when body armour has protected the wearer from blunt trauma injury e.g. following a road traffic collision. Details of any occasions when body armour has protected wearers from sustaining an injury should be recorded as near misses using the Accident / Near miss reporting system. These incidents will be noted and monitored by the HR Health and Safety Unit who can use the data to monitor force wide trends.

## 6. Frequently asked questions

**Q I am a uniformed Response officer; do I have to wear body armour all the time?**

**A** *Yes, whilst engaged on operational patrol, effecting arrests or executing property warrants unless a specific task risk assessment deems it unnecessary.*

**Q I am a uniform Neighbourhood officer / PCSO, do I have to wear body armour all the time?**

**A** *Yes, whilst engaged on operational patrol, effecting arrests or executing property warrants. Specific tasks and duties such as community meetings will be risk assessed by the officer. Officers and staff are empowered to make reasoned and justifiable decisions around body armour and a degree of common sense is expected e.g. an officer / staff would not be expected to wear body armour at a community meeting where there is no threat or risk of harm.*

**Q I am a Centralised Crime officer, am I expected to wear body armour during normal duties?**

**A** *No, however, where a task involves a risk of personal injury then body armour is to be worn if available. If appropriate an alternative tactical option should be considered if no body armour is available, notwithstanding circumstances whereby it will be necessary to arrest an offender following a dynamic risk assessment.*

**Q I am an operational uniform officer, but I sometimes operate in plain clothes, do I have to wear body armour when in plain clothes?**

**A** *Each role has a risk assessment. If that risk assessment identifies a need for covert body armour, then it should be made available to staff. Body armour should be worn unless a specific task risk assessment deems it unnecessary.*

**Q Is body armour bullet proof as well as stab proof?**

**A** Standard body armour is classed as HG1A/KR1 or HO1 which means that it is resistant to some lower velocity bullets (typically used in handguns) and knife resistant. Officers and staff must not place themselves in undue danger because they are wearing body armour. Body armour is a last resort defence against firearms and edged weapons.

**Q Why do Matrix disruption officers wear different armour?**

**A** *Matrix disruption body armour is HG1A/KR2 or HO1 which provides a slightly higher level of protection against edged weapons. This is due to the role requirement of Disruption staff, i.e. Level 1 public order and being the force resource to certain incidents that require this increased protection.*

**Q I am a Police motorcycle rider; do I have to wear body armour?**

**A** *Police motorcyclists have been issued flexible covert body armour to wear over motorcycle leathers. This should be worn when on patrol duties. Specific task risk assessments may deem the wearing of this body armour unnecessary.*

**Q I used to be in Firearms, can I still wear my firearms body armour?**

**A** *No. Body armour worn by Firearms officers is HG2 or HO2 and does not provide protection and resistance to edged weapons.*