

Date: 14th August 2024
Our ref: FOI/24/013074/D

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: FOI/24/013074/D

I write in connection with your request for information dated 07/08/2024, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

Pursuant to FOI 01/FOI/24/012966/A which somebody else has asked and which outlines the relevant GMP policy on velcro patches as of July 2024 and which is listed below for ease, I am asking the following under the Freedom of Information Act:

5.2.3 Velcro patches or identifying badges

In certain operational situations there may be a reason to wear an identifying patch to signify membership to an operational unit or the specific functionality of the wearing officer e.g. firearms wear the velcro patch of red asterisk. It is on this basis that velcro patches are permitted where there are clear operational reasons, purchase and supply will be via Business Support Services Stores.

- Other Velcro patches that have no authorised operational function code or symbol and are not police related but are linked to specific dates, celebrations or memorials are not permitted without clear authorisation from District/Branch Commanders.***
- These will be assessed on a case basis and wearing may be restricted to a particular timeframe e.g. wearing of the remembrance poppy during November.***
- It is not appropriate for officers and staff to purchase Velcro patches and wear these upon their uniform if they do not satisfy either of the above requirements.***

1. What consideration has been given by Greater Manchester Police (the officer who wrote your 2024 uniform policy / its working and clearing group and the Senior Leadership Team) for operational frontline uniformed police officers to wear an unedited / undoctored and moderately sized patch of either the flag of the United Kingdom, England, Scotland or Wales on their uniform?

- 2. For a copy of any notes, emails or general correspondence between / by / from / to SLT and any other GMP officers or staff about the wearing of the flag of the United Kingdom, England, Scotland or Wales on officer uniforms.**
- 3. Given it is not in your current uniform policy, are Greater Manchester Police officers permitted to wear an unedited / undoctored and moderately sized patch of either the flag of the United Kingdom, England, Scotland or Wales on their uniform?**
- 4. If GMP does not consider the national flag (which flies outside GMP FHQ and its police stations and is on the list of approved flags by DCMS) “police related” or an “operational symbol” then why does it not given GMP officers are Crown Servants who serve His Majesty The King.**
- 5. If GMP officers choose to wear the national flag of the country for which they serve and where they are Crown Servants (UK, England, Scotland or Wales flags) would GMP proceed with disciplining or restricting the officer if s/he fails to remove the flag?**
- 6. Does GMP fly the flag of St George outside FHQ and its police stations on St George’s Day?**

Police officers are proud to serve their communities and their country. Wearing the national flag (UK, England, Scotland or Wales) on their uniform is something that ought to be approved without question, and being ordered to remove the flag from their uniform should not be a lawful order.

Please note that this request does not relate to the thin blue line patch or any other flag which has been doctored e.g. a black and white Union Flag with a poppy. It relates solely to the official flags of the United Kingdom and its constituent countries and the official colours on those flags.

Should request number two go over the maximum cost then please limit the documents to the most recent uniform policy edition but focus on all relevant emails exchanged including earlier editions of the uniform policy.

Result of Searches

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to locate the requested information and I can confirm some of the information requested is held by GMP.

Question 1 – The consideration given to Velcro patches to be worn on police uniform was that of operational need/benefit.

Question 2 – No information held relevant to this question.

Question 3 – District/Branch Commanders can review on a case by case basis as per the policy with their own rationale.

Question 4 – GMP are very proud to serve His Majesty the King and wear his cypher with pride upon the GMP emblem. The emblem is featured on operational headwear as part of uniform/dress.

Question 5 – District/Branch Commanders can review on a case by case basis as per the policy with their own rationale.

Question 6 – GMP always fly the Union flag and the GMP flag which features the GMP emblem.