

Accreditation for Major Events & Political Conferences

Procedure

Greater Manchester Police

September 2021



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1. Introduction and Background

This procedure sets out the process and criteria by which the Greater Manchester Police (GMP) will decide whether to approve or refuse an application for accreditation to attend a Party Political Conference or certain other major events held in the Greater Manchester police area.

This document is available to the public and is published on the GMP website.

2. Scope

It was decided by the Political Conference Policing Group (PCPG) that a national accreditation team should be formed to be a single point of interface between the police service and the political parties with respect to accreditation for the annual political party conferences of both the Conservative and Labour Party (the Party Conferences) and undertake to (i) identity verification; and (ii) initial police security checks as part of the accreditation process for the Party Conferences, irrespective of where these are held.

The NAT presently sits within Greater Manchester Police (GMP).

3. Roles & Responsibilities

The NAT has delegated authority from the Chief Constables of the police forces in whose police areas the Party Conferences are being held (the host force) to approve accreditation applications in certain situations.

NAT does not have the power to refuse accreditation applications, only to refer applications to the host force for further consideration. The host force considers applications referred to it by NAT and decides whether to approve or refuse accreditation. The host force's decision is communicated to the NAT, which communicates the host force's decision to the relevant political party.

4. Terms and Definitions

CAS - Conference Accreditation System
ECHR - European Convention on Human Rights
GMP - Greater Manchester Police

NAT - National Accreditation Team
PCPG - Political Conference Policing Group
SecCo - Security Coordinator

5. Procedure

5.1 Referrals from the National Accreditation Team

For the Party Political Conferences of the Conservative and Labour Parties and certain other major events (the event), the National Accreditation Team (NAT) undertakes (i) identity verification; and (ii) initial police security checks on national police databases as part of the police accreditation process, irrespective of where the event is held.

The NAT has delegated authority from the Chief Constable of the police force in whose police areas a Party Conference/major event is being held (the host force) to approve accreditation applications in certain circumstances: see the National Accreditation Standards. The NAT does not have the power to refuse accreditation applications, only to refer applications to the host force for further consideration and an accreditation decision: see the PCPG NAT Referral Policy.

Where the NAT refers an accreditation application to GMP as the host force, GMP will take the accreditation decision.

5.2 Process

Where GMP is the host force for the event and receives a referral from NAT, GMP will:

- Consider the NAT accreditation referral;
- Make an accreditation decision;
- Record the rationale for any decision;
- Inform the NAT of the accreditation decision.

These steps are considered in turn.

5.3 Consider the NAT accreditation referral

Where the NAT decides to refer an application to the host force, the NAT will prepare a referral. This will include the applicant's details, the police security checks carried out by the NAT, a summary of the relevant results obtained and reason for referral.

The referral summary will be endorsed by the NAT Accreditation Manager and supplied to either the Silver Commander or Security Coordinator (SecCo) in the host force. NAT presently sits within GMP. For as long as this continues to be the case, in cases where GMP is the host force, rather than completing a referral form NAT will provide the GMP Silver Commander or Security Coordinator (SecCo) with a list of referrals. The GMP Silver Commander or Security Coordinator (SecCo) will then view the material that would otherwise have been included on a referral form directly on the Conference Accreditation System (CAS).

GMP will consider the NAT referral, but the decision maker will bear in mind that:

- A referral by the NAT is **not** a recommendation by NAT that the host force should refuse an accreditation application;
- The threshold for the NAT to refer an accreditation application to GMP in accordance with the PCPG NAT Referral Policy is necessarily lower than the threshold to be applied by GMP in deciding whether to refuse an application after more detailed consideration;
- The NAT will not necessarily have had access to all of the information about the applicant and the party conference/major event that will or may become available to GMP.

The contents of the NAT referral will, however, provide a useful starting point for GMP's police security checks on the convictions/cautions/intelligence/information on national police databases that led the NAT to conclude that its referral criteria were met.

GMP will conduct additional police security checks on the applicant as required, which might include:

- Further checks on the national police databases checked by the NAT if the summary provided by NAT is not considered to be sufficiently detailed.
- Checks on local (GMP) police databases that might hold additional relevant information on the applicant.
- Open-source checks on the applicant.

Whether GMP conducts additional police security checks are required will be judged on a case-by-case basis. For instance, further checks may not be required if the individual has a recent conviction for a serious offence relevant to the safety of those present at the event, since that alone may be sufficient to satisfy the two-stage test for refusal of police accreditation.

5.4 Make an accreditation decision

GMP will make a decision as to whether to allow or refuse the accreditation application in accordance with this policy.

GMP will reach its decision based on:

- The information on CAS provided by the political party/major event organiser drawn from the applicant's application to attend the conference/major event.
- The information provided by NAT following its security checks.
- Any additional information obtained by GMP following any additional security checks.
- Any representations or further information or documents provided by the applicant following a "minded to" refuse decision (as to which, see below).
- The policing plan for the event including information about the schedule and the identity of persons attending (e.g. protected persons).
- Any intelligence on specific risks to the security of the event or the safety of those present at the event and GMP's contingencies to mitigate those risks.

GMP will apply the following two-stage test to make accreditation decisions:

- (1) are there reasonable grounds for suspecting that the applicant is or has been involved in behaviour that may pose a risk to the safety of those present at the event?
- (2) if so, is it appropriate, in all the circumstances to refuse accreditation for the applicant to attend the event?

With respect to the first stage of the test, the decision maker will consider factors including, but not limited to:

- How reliable the information/intelligence is where there has been no conviction/caution;
- How recent the conviction/caution/intelligence/information is – for convictions or cautions, the rules on the disclosure of a criminal record for the purposes of employment etc. should be taken into account;
- How relevant the conviction/caution/intelligence/information is to the question whether the individual may engage in behaviour that would pose a risk to the safety of those present at the event. For instance, a conviction for fraud might not (without more) suggest that the individual may engage in behaviour that would pose a risk to the safety of those present at the event, but intelligence that the individual had been involved in arson might.
- Any intelligence on specific risks to the security of the event or the safety of those present at the event and GMP's contingencies to mitigate those risks.

It will be noted that the first stage of the test does not require reasonable grounds for suspecting that the person is or has been involved in criminal activity, only that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the person is or has been involved in behaviour that may pose a risk to the safety of those present at the event. The suspicion does not need to be that the person will repeat the precisely the type of behavior that they have (or are suspected of having) been involved in at the event. Rather, the past behavior or suspected behaviour must support reasonable grounds for suspecting that the person may engage in behaviour at the event that would pose a risk to the safety of those present .

The second stage of the test is only reached if the first stage is satisfied.

With respect to the second stage of the test, the decision maker will reach a proportionate decision taking into account all of the circumstances of including, but not limited to:

- The nature of the event.
- Any intelligence on specific risks to the security of the event or the safety of those present at the event and GMPs contingencies to mitigate those risks.
- The degree of risk posed by the applicant to the safety of those present at the event.
- The role the applicant is to play at the event.
- The consequences of refusal of accreditation on the applicant which might include, but are not limited to:
 - Interference with the applicant's ECHR rights. This is a particular concern with respect to (i) applications for accreditation to attend Party Political Conferences by members of the relevant of political party (Articles 10 and 11 ECHR); (ii) applications by Media Personnel to attend events (Article 10 ECHR); (iii) applications by persons who are designated as speakers at events (Article 10 ECHR). In any of these cases, the justification for interfering with the applicant's rights should be given very careful consideration.
 - Loss of opportunity to enjoy the event.
 - Loss of opportunity to earn money/other commercial opportunities.

If the decision maker decides to approve the accreditation application, GMP will communicate its decision to the NAT (see below). No further action is required by GMP.

If, following the two-stage test, the decision maker decides that they are “minded to” refuse the application, the applicant will, where possible, be notified and given the opportunity to make representations as to why their application should be allowed. The mechanism for making representations is set out below.

Where the applicant makes representations, the decision maker will reconsider the application and make a final accreditation decision applying the two-stage test set out above, taking into account any representations or further information or documents provided by the applicant.

Where the applicant declines the opportunity to make representations, or without good reason fails to comply with the manner in which GMP has invited representations (including the time for representations stipulated by GMP), or where it is not possible to give the applicant the opportunity to make representations, GMP will confirm its “minded to” decision as a final decision to refuse the application.

It is not the function of GMP to resolve disputes by the applicant with respect to allegations contained in police information/intelligence. However, where that information/intelligence is likely to have a significant impact on the accreditation decision and the applicant makes representations that raise a real doubt as to the accuracy of the information/intelligence, and where there sufficient time to do so, GMP may contact the police force/agency that uploaded the information/intelligence onto the relevant police database to seek clarification or further information before deciding that the first stage of the two-stage test is met.

The applicant has no right to make further representations and no right of appeal against GMP’s final accreditation decision.

5.5 Record the rationale for any decision to refuse accreditation

Where GMP’s decision is to refuse an accreditation application, the decision maker will make a contemporaneous record of the rationale for their decision by reference to the two-stage test. The rationale should be clear and sufficiently detailed to demonstrate to the reader the matters that were taken into account (including any representations made by the applicant following a “minded to” decision) and how the decision maker weighed those matters to reach a proportionate decision.

Where part(s) of the rationale contain sensitive information or intelligence, those parts of the rationale that are sensitive should be clearly marked.

It should be born in mind that if the applicant challenges GMP’s accreditation refusal in legal proceedings, contemporaneous record of the decision maker’s rationale will be a key piece of evidence that is likely to be disclosable to the applicant, subject to considerations of public interest immunity and the data protection/ECHR rights of others.

5.6 Inform the NAT of the accreditation decision

Finally, GMP will communicate its decision on the accreditation application to the NAT – either that the application has been allowed or that a final decision has been made to refuse the application.

The NAT will communicate GMP’s decision to the event organiser or the applicant’s sponsor.

5.7 Representations

Where GMP decides that it is “minded to” refuse an application, the applicant will, where possible, be notified and given the opportunity to make representations as to why their application should be allowed.

Whether it is possible to give the applicant the opportunity to make representations will depend on factors including, but not limited to, the proximity in time of the event. Reasonable efforts will be made by GMP to give the applicant the opportunity to make representations.

The manner in which the representations will be received will be a matter for GMP taking into account operational considerations, considerations of cost and practicality (e.g. the proximity in time of the conference, the distance of the applicant’s home address from Manchester) and any reasonable adjustments required by an applicant who is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010. GMP might, for instance, invite written representations by email within a specified time (e.g. within seven days or 24 hours) or ask the applicant to attend a face to face interview, or an interview by telephone or by a video-conferencing facility. GMP might request that the applicant provide specific further information or documentation. This will be clearly communicated by GMP to the applicant.

If the applicant declines the opportunity to make representations, or without good reason fails to comply with the manner in which GMP has invited representations (including the time for representations stipulated by GMP) GMP will confirm its “minded to” decision and make a final decision to refuse the application.

If the applicant accepts the opportunity to make representations, GMP will provide the applicant with as much information as possible as to why it is “minded to” refuse their application to enable the applicant to make effective representations.

In some cases this will not pose any difficulty, for instance where the basis for the “minded to” decision is the applicant’s conviction, which is a matter of public record.

In cases where the “minded to” decision is based on intelligence/information derived from national police databases, GMP should check with the police force or agency that uploaded that information/intelligence to the database (or internally in the case of GMP intelligence) before revealing it to the applicant. Where the police force/agency in question objects to the information being revealed to the applicant, a sanitised “gist” of the intelligence/information approved by the police force/agency in question should be provided to the applicant wherever possible.

In some cases, it may not be possible to provide even a gist intelligence/information derived from police databases, for instance in cases where doing so would create a risk to the life or safety of a third party or compromise an ongoing police operation. In those circumstances it should be explained to the applicant that the reason for the “minded to” decision cannot be provided.

The purpose of seeking representations is to give the applicant the opportunity to explain why their accreditation application should not be refused and may include, but is not limited to, the applicant:

- Disputing the reliability of the intelligence/information relied upon, including by providing information or documents that contradict the allegation.

- Explaining why, in their view, the conviction/caution intelligence/information is not relevant to whether they may engage in behaviour that would pose a risk to the safety of those present at the event.
- Giving further information on the role they are to play at the event.
- Describing what the consequences would be for them if their accreditation application were to be refused.
- Providing further information or documentation specifically sought by GMP or that the applicant considers would assist in the accreditation decision.

6. Associated Documents

- Political Conference Policing Group (PCPG) - National Accreditation Team Referral Policy
- National Accreditation Standards

7. Statutory Compliance & Consultation

7.1 Statutory Compliance

7.1.1 Equality Act (2010)

This policy applies to workforce and delegates for high security events, and is a legally approved document. Protected characteristics are not considered when making accreditation decisions, if applicable to the applicant making representations then this can be raised by the applicant and taken into consideration.

7.1.2 The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (2018)

Greater Manchester Police has a duty to ensure, so far as is possible, that all staff comply with the provisions of the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, particularly relating to their access to, and dissemination of, a wide variety of personal information and intelligence.

The Information Compliance & Records Management Unit has assessed this procedure; the purpose of this procedure is compliant with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the processing of information outlined in this procedure has a clear lawful processing condition (law enforcement processing – Part 3 DPA 2018).

7.1.3 Freedom of Information Act (2000)

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) grants a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities. This policy and procedure is intended to be a public document and available via the GMP website.

7.2 Consultation

Department	Comments
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IT	n/a
Finance	n/a
Human Resources	n/a
Training	n/a
Health & Safety	n/a
Information Security	n/a
Information Compliance	Procedure Agreed – No changes
Legal Services	Procedure Agreed – No changes

8. Appendices

None.