

Dated: 21/11/2024

POLICY TITLE: Disclosure to the Media and/ or Partner Agencies

OWNING DIRECTORATE: Corporate & Strategic Services

AUTHOR: Head of Communications and Engagement

CONTACT DETAILS: 101

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT: Complete

AIM OF POLICY: The principal aims of disclosing police-held images are to prevent and detect crime and disorder; to demonstrate police action against criminal behaviour; to support the principle of 'Open Justice' - that justice is done and seen to be done; to maximise engagement with all sectors of the media; to build trust and confidence in the community and reduce crime and disorder.

BENEFIT OF POLICY: Providing information, stories and pictures to the Press and sharing on social media invariably results in a higher level of public confidence thereby enabling the Force to fulfil the aims of the policy as above.

REASON FOR POLICY: To outline the Force's position in relation to dealing with the Press and demands from the media for visual images to accompany reports of convictions. To encourage all officers and police staff to engage with the media.

Northumbria Police will identify opportunities to work in partnership with all sections of the media to:

- Help prevent crime and disorder and reassure the public.
- Help bring offenders to justice.
- Release information that is in the public interest and provide open and transparent responses.
- Support the principle of 'Open Justice' - justice that is done and seen to be done.

It is recognised the media is an important channel of communication that can help in the prevention and detection of crime and disorder. The media also plays an important part in public reassurance and confidence.

Northumbria Police will promote a culture where officers and police staff are encouraged to, and are confident about, working in partnership with the media to help build trust and confidence in communities.

To achieve this objective, everyone will:

- Accept opportunities to explain police action to the media unless there is a clear operational reason not to do so.

- Actively seek opportunities to promote their work to the community via the media and on-line channels.
- Use media communication in the prevention and detection of crime.

Openness, accountability and honesty will underpin all of the Force's decisions about the release of information both proactively and reactively.

This policy takes into account the recommendations made by The Leveson Enquiry.

The Communication & Engagement Department will drive this policy, providing area commands and departments with professional advice, support and guidance.

The Communication & Engagement Department will consider issuing images of:

- Convicted offenders, if the release is proportionate to public interest, taking into consideration the seriousness of the offence and the length of the sentence.
- Those subject, for example, of a Civil Injunction or Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO), Order After Conviction (OAC), Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO), or Risk of Sexual Harm Order (ROSHO). (This is not an exhaustive list.)
- Images of juvenile offenders will only be considered for release if reporting restrictions have been lifted, allowing the media to identify them.

Northumbria Police will not release images to the media and/or partner agencies if such release:

- is likely to contravene relevant legislation so could leave the organisation open to litigation.
- could compromise ongoing investigations.
- could identify third parties whose anonymity has legal protection (e.g. rape victims, juveniles).
- could prejudice forthcoming proceedings.

CCTV Footage / Video Stills

Northumbria Police guidelines relating to the release of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) footage, including the release of CCTV footage from other organisations by Northumbria Police, mirror those established by the National Police Chiefs' Council. This guidance is included in the document 'Publicising Sentencing Outcomes', a protocol agreed by chief police officers, chief crown prosecutors and the media.

Northumbria Police will release footage/stills from CCTV systems and police video when:

- Appealing for witnesses;
- Trying to identify suspects;
- Highlighting criminal activity (e.g. post-trial); or
- Illustrating police action against criminal behaviour.

Northumbria Police will not release footage/stills from CCTV systems and police video between arrests and trial.

On each occasion, the footage must be viewed by the officer in charge and the faces of any individual witnesses or people unconnected with the criminal activity obscured before release, unless the individuals have given written permission otherwise.

No material will be released for commercial gain or entertainment purposes.

Release of the footage/stills must be accompanied by the words 'Northumbria Police Copyright - No Reproduction Without Permission'. In the case of CCTV footage, the media must sign a licence agreement limiting its use.

Northumbria Police acknowledges that disclosure of police-held images could impinge on the human rights of the individual for private and family life afforded by Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998. This does not prevent images being disclosed in accordance with law and, if necessary, in the interests of public safety, for the prevention and detection of crime and disorder, or to protect others' rights and freedoms. However, such disclosure must be proportionate to the harm that might otherwise occur, and to the minimum extent necessary to achieve the stated aim.

It is also acknowledged that images of named people which are in police possession are classed as data under the Data Protection Act. However, Section 29 (1) (a) of the Act allows for the release of police-held personal data for the prevention and detection of crime.

SOURCE DOCUMENT: N/a

GROUPS AFFECTED: All police officers and staff.

ACCESS AND DISCLOSURE RESTRICTIONS: None
