

**Dated:** 07/10/24

**POLICY TITLE:** Taking the Media on Police Operations

**OWNING DIRECTORATE:** Corporate & Strategic Services

**AUTHOR:** Head of Communications and Engagement

**CONTACT DETAILS:** 101

**EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT:** Complete

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**AIM OF POLICY:** To gain media coverage of proactive police operations against targeted offenders, thereby increasing public reassurance.

**BENEFIT OF POLICY:** By encouraging media coverage of appropriate police operations, the Force has a valuable tool which can give the public real insight into policing and reassure them that areas of major concern are being tackled.

**REASON FOR POLICY:** The media have a continuing interest in police operations and frequently ask to observe them. This policy directs how Northumbria Police will manage media involvement.

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Northumbria Police welcomes media involvement in raids, operations, etc. when the resulting coverage will positively highlight Force efforts to prevent, detect or reduce crime, reduce the fear of crime or promote crime prevention issues.

Officers are encouraged to consider media involvement in all types of operations, particularly those focused on public reassurance. Full consideration should also be given to staff recording video and photographic material to supply to the media and to act as a library source for future occasions. The possible need to disclose such material in legal proceedings should not be seen to inhibit such opportunities but must be subject to agreement, where appropriate, with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

However, officers should be aware of the legal issues surrounding the presence of the media on operations, and the reasons why media attendance was justified must be formally recorded by the officer in charge (OIC) and disclosed to the CPS.

Any proposal to allow a media presence on police operations must first consider whether such action may:

- interfere with an individual's right to a fair trial under the Human Rights Act

- interfere with an individual's right to privacy under the Human Rights Act (which may be affected by the media entering private property without permission, taking film or photographs on private property without permission and broadcasting or publishing such material)
- cause unjustifiable distress or harassment to those being investigated
- prejudice the innocent i.e. If it becomes clear that no unlawful activities have been taking place at a particular address visited by officers during an operation, all necessary steps to ensure that no images or text relating to that address are published in any format will be taken by the Media and Communications Adviser.
- cause distress to innocent members of the public
- jeopardise future police operations (e.g. identification of officers or covert techniques).

Any coverage will also include a reassurance message, which ideally should be delivered by the appropriate police officer.

A police warrant does not cover the entry of the media and under no circumstances will officers of any rank authorise media entry into private premises.

The decision to invite the media on police operations or raids, or release Northumbria Police footage of police operations on private property, will be made in consultation with the Communications and Engagement Department and sanctioned by a member of the area command/department management team. In cases of doubt or potential difficulty, a decision should be sought from the Deputy Chief Constable via a Media and Communications Adviser.

Taking media on police operations should always be used proportionately and in any event advice will be sought from the Communications and Engagement Department who can advise on any potential conflict with other events or ongoing issues which may impact on decision making.

Wherever possible a representative from the Communications and Engagement Department should be present to manage the media and minimise impact on operational officers.

The publication of any police video footage is subject to Northumbria Police policy 'Disclosure to the Media and /or Partner Agencies'.

Where media representatives are to be carried in police vehicles this will be in accordance with Northumbria Police Policy 'Passengers in Police Vehicles'.

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**SOURCE DOCUMENT:** N/A

**GROUPS AFFECTED:** Media Advisers and Operational Officers

**ACCESS AND DISCLOSURE RESTRICTIONS:** None.

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