

SCHEDULE 4

Code of Conduct for RUC Officers

- (a) The primary duties of members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary are the protection of life and property, the preservation of peace, and the prevention and detection of criminal offences. To fulfil these duties they are granted extraordinary powers; the public and the police service therefore have the right to expect the highest standards of conduct from them.
- (b) This Code sets out the principles which guide police officers' conduct. It does not seek to restrict officers' discretion: rather it aims to define the parameters of conduct within which that discretion should be exercised. However, it is important to note that any breach of the principles in this Code may result in action being taken, which, in serious cases, could involve dismissal. In addition, the Police Ombudsman has powers in relation to disciplinary proceedings, for example, the Ombudsman can direct that charges can be brought and invoke a special procedure known as a Directed Tribunal.
- (c) This Code applies to the conduct of members of the RUC in all ranks, and all members of the RUC Reserve, whether part-time or full-time whilst on duty, or off duty if the conduct is serious enough to indicate that an officer is not fit to be a police officer. It will be applied in a reasonable and objective manner. Due regard will be paid to the degree of negligence or deliberate fault and to the nature and circumstances of an officer's conduct.

Honesty and integrity

1. It is of paramount importance that the public has faith in the honesty and integrity of police officers. Officers should therefore be open and truthful in their dealings; avoid being improperly beholden to any person or institution; and discharge their duties with integrity.

Fairness and impartiality

2. Police officers have a particular responsibility to act with fairness and impartiality in all their dealings with the public and their colleagues. and to be seen to do so.

Discrimination

3. Quite apart from any breach of the equality legislation, police officers must not discriminate against the public or their colleagues for any reason related to sex, marital status, religious belief, political opinion, disability, racial group, age, sexual orientation, or having or not having dependants. Discrimination may be direct, or indirect or take the form of intimidation.

Note : "Racial Group means a group of persons defined by reference to colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins".

Politeness and tolerance

4. Officers should treat members of the public and colleagues with courtesy and respect, avoiding abusive and deriding attitudes or behaviour. In particular, officers must avoid: favouritism of an individual or group; all forms of harassment, victimisation or unlawful discrimination; and overbearing conduct to a colleague, particularly to one junior in rank or service.

Use of force and abuse of authority

5. Officers must never knowingly use more force than is reasonable, nor should they abuse their authority.

Status: This is the original version (as it was originally made). This item of legislation is currently only available in its original format.

Performance of duties

6. Officers should be conscientious and diligent in the performance of their duties. Officers should attend work promptly when rostered for duty.

Lawful orders

7. The police service is a disciplined body. Unless there is good and sufficient cause to do otherwise, officers must obey all lawful orders and abide by the provisions of RUC Regulations. Officers should support their colleagues in the execution of their lawful duties, and oppose any improper behaviour, reporting it where appropriate.

Confidentiality

8. Information which comes into the possession of the police should be treated as confidential. It should not be used for personal benefit and nor should it be divulged to other parties except in the proper course of police duty. Similarly, officers should respect, as confidential, information about force policy and operations unless authorised to disclose it in the course of their duties.

Criminal Offences

9. Officers must report any proceedings for a criminal offence taken against them. A conviction for a criminal offence may result in further action being taken.

Property

10. Officers must exercise reasonable care to prevent loss or damage to property (excluding their own personal property but including police property).

Sobriety

11. Whilst on duty(1) officers must be sober(2). Officers should not consume alcohol when on duty unless specifically authorised to do so or it becomes necessary for the proper discharge of police duty.

Appearance

12. Unless on duties which dictate otherwise, officers should always be well turned out, clean and tidy whilst on duty in uniform or in plain clothes.

General Conduct

13. Whether on or off duty, police officers should not behave in a way which is likely to bring discredit upon the police service.

(1) The onus to remain sober applies when the officer is off duty but has agreed to be available for recall to duty to deal with matters which might occur within the area(s) he/she has agreed to cover. It does not apply to the general 24-hour responsibility officers have for their own command area/department.

(2) An officer who is unexpectedly called out for duty should be able, at no risk of discredit, to say that he or she has had too much to drink.