

Committee(s): Professional Standards and Integrity Sub Committee	Date(s): 3 rd June 2019
Subject: Introduction of Spit and Bite Guards	Public
Report of: Commissioner of Police Pol 43-19	For Information
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Summary

In November 2018, the Force's Strategic Management Board (SMB) was presented with proposals for the introduction of spit and bite guards for officers to have available as a tactical option. Approval was given at this meeting for implementation of this tactic. This has mainly been in response to an increase nationally in assaults on Police Officers. Over 30 of the 43 UK Police forces have now approved and have implemented, the use of these items and their implementation and use is supported by the Home Secretary. At the SMB meeting, Board members fully supported the proposal and agreed to the introduction of spit and bite guards. The use of this option has also been supported by the National Police Federation and the CoLP Police Federation.

In the City of London, since April 2017 to November 2018 officers have completed 2277 Use of Force (UoF) reports. 666 UoF reports were documented as the offender offering Aggressive Resistance, and 50 documented as the offender offering Serious Aggressive Resistance.

Members may be concerned that this might increase the risk of complaints against Officers. However, Officers are being provided with approved training as part of their Personal Safety Training and the use of the guards is being governed by a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure approved at January 2019 SMB, based on best practice. The use of spit and bite guards will be monitored via the completion of Use of Force forms and will be reported to the Force Use of Force Working Group which is chaired by the Superintendent Response and Operations. The number of complaints received as a result of the use of this tactic will also be monitored by the Professional Standards Department (PSD).

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. In November 2018, the Force's Strategic Management Board (SMB) was presented with proposals by the Uniformed Policing Directorate (UPD) for the introduction of spit and bite guards for officers to have available as a tactical option. The proposal was supported by the CoLP Police Federation and has been supported nationally by the national Police Federation. This has mainly been in response to an increase nationally in assaults on Police Officers. Over 30 of the 43 UK Police forces have now approved and have implemented, the use of these items and their implementation and use is supported by the Home Secretary. At the SMB meeting, Board members fully supported the proposal and agreed to the introduction of spit and bite guards.
2. Assaults on Police Officers in the UK are at an all-time high. Operation Hampshire has been introduced regarding welfare of officers subject to assault, where the Police Federation are notified of assaults to ensure the welfare needs of officers who are victims of assault are met.
3. Police training has historically focused on physical holds to try and control detainees who may be spitting, trying to bite showing aggressive resistance or trying to assault officers in other ways. Whilst this has proved generally successful to prevent spit and other assaults, it does have potential risks around causing position asphyxia and / or breathing difficulties.

Current Position

4. In the City of London, since April 2017 to November 2018 officers have completed 2277 Use of Force (UoF) reports with 831 documented as alcohol related incidents. 666 UoF reports were documented as the offender offering Aggressive Resistance, and 50 documented as the offender offering Serious Aggressive Resistance. In 2018 to November, there were 8 near miss reports in relation to officers being spat at. More robust reporting processes have been put in place and more officers are now aware of the need to report these incidents.
5. The spit and bite guard is a breathable, mesh material garment that covers the face and head. This prevents the wearer from being able to assault officers, staff and members of the public by means of spitting, so reducing the potential of communicable/contagious diseases. The spit guard will NOT prevent biting - but could lessen the degree of injury and contamination.
6. The application of such restraints is clearly based on the individual officers' perception of the subject at the time and the independent factors surrounding the arrest and individual detainee and dynamic risk assessment.
7. Mental health, and or age would not be an automatic barrier to use of the equipment, but careful consideration would be given to all available information and a clear rationale must be in place to ensure that it is proportionate, lawful, accountable and necessary in the circumstances.

Basic Principles of usage of the spit and bite guard

8. The spit and bite guard can only be applied –
 - to a person who is spitting, has spat, is preparing to spit or is threatening to spit.
 - is biting, has bitten, is preparing to bite or is threatening to bite.
 - Previous instances of the above will not provide justification for its use in isolation, but combined with the above may provide justification.

The following considerations need to be considered when applying a spit and bite guard –

- Spit and bite guards should only be applied when the subject is under control, whether through use of multi officer restraint techniques and/or handcuffs.
- Spit and bite guards can be applied to a standing, kneeling or prone subject as long as they are under control. As with all restraint tactics, officers are reminded of the dangers associated with positional asphyxia and Acute Behavioural Disorder (ABD).
- The officer applying the spit and bite guard should where practicable, be additional to the officers restraining the subject.
- Where practicable a safety officer will be appointed and have responsibility for:
- **Care** by monitoring the subject and being aware of their visible signs whilst they are wearing a spit and bite guard.
- **Control** of the subject's head and monitor for signs of asphyxia or difficulty breathing - and the general situation.
- **Communication** with the subject / officers involved in the restraint / custody officer.

Training and Standard Operating Procedure

9. The techniques for applying spit and bite guards are incorporated in the Officer Safety Manual. The spit and bite guards can be placed over the head of the subject when standing or in the prone position, if the subject is wearing glasses, these would have to be removed prior to the spit hood being used.
10. The training package includes a 15 minute video and discussion and practical training in relation to the application of the spit and bite guard and has been included in the existing officer Personal Safety Training (PST). This provides an excellent training opportunity which will ensure proper, effective and safe usage reducing the risk of any complaints. The level of complaint regarding use of force in the City of London is currently low and the City of London Police level of PST is exceptional and is managed by Learning and Development.
11. The Commissioner directed that a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure be developed based on best practice in other forces and it was agreed that Cambridgeshire Constabulary SOP would be used as a basis as they were regarded as one of the Forces to have best practice in this area. The Force SMB agreed that the spit and bite guard would only be introduced after the SOP was presented to SMB which was submitted to the January 2019 SMB meeting and approved. Training has now commenced and the use of spit and bite guards has been implemented.

Monitoring and scrutiny

12. Officers are required to complete a form (Form 50) every time they are required to use force on a detainee and this now includes the application of a spit and bite guard. These are recorded on a database and reported to the Use of Force Working Group chaired by the Superintendent Response & Operations, UPD quarterly. A full statement will be completed by the officers justifying use of spit guards. Chief Inspector Specialist Support UPD is operational lead and will review all uses of this tactic until October 2019 (6 months) whilst it is bedding in and Professional Standards will be included in this review as will the Equality and Inclusion Manager. Any inappropriate use or complaints will be investigated by Professional Standards Department as a matter of course.
13. The number of complaints received as a result of the use of this tactic will also be monitored by the Professional Standards Department (PSD).

Corporate & Strategic Implications

14. This supports the City of London Police Corporate Plan 2018-23 ambitions:
 - **To deliver a policing service that is valued** by those who live, work and visit the City of London.
 - **To make the City of London the safest city area in the world**

This supports the City of London Corporation Corporate Plan 2018-23

- **To contribute to a flourishing society-** People are safe and feel safe

Conclusion

15. The introduction of the use of spit and bite guards as a tactical option for officers has been given due consideration and the Force has ensured that it has comprehensive training and SOP in place and that the use of this option is also monitored and scrutinised at the appropriate forum in Force. There is no doubt that the introduction of the spit and bite guard will provide officers with an option to enable them to manage any attempt at assault on the officer in a way that is safe for the detainee.

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