



Home Office

Dress code and standard of appearance for criminal investigation staff

Version 4.0

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About this guidance

This guidance tells criminal investigators in Immigration Enforcement Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) teams about the dress code and standards of appearance which staff are expected to follow.

It tells you about:

- responsibilities
- purpose of the dress code
- risk assessment and health and safety considerations
- definition of an acceptable standard of appearance
- clothing
- general appearance including:
 - headwear
 - footwear
 - hair
 - facial hair
 - jewellery
 - body piercing
 - tattoos
- sunglasses and spectacles
- make up and cosmetics
- monitoring and evaluation

You must always act in a way that is professional and that deserves the confidence of all those you deal with.

The Home Office has a duty to safeguard vulnerable people and promote the welfare of children for more information see: [Vulnerable adults and children](#).

Criminal Investigators in Immigration Enforcement must be aware of their obligations under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Part 3 of the Data Protection Act 2018 see: [Data protection](#).

Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then you can email the CFI operational guidance team. For queries relating to the Immigration Enforcement uniform, email the IE Uniform team.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email the Guidance Review, Atlas and Forms team.

Publication

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was published:

- version **4.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **27 August 2025**

Changes from last version of this guidance

Changes from the last version of this guidance include:

- hyperlinks updated to latest IE uniform and non-uniform policy
- clarification on permitted use of protective face masks on safety grounds

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Responsibilities

This page tells criminal investigators in Immigration Enforcement Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) teams about their responsibilities regarding the dress code and standard of appearance.

The individual

It is your responsibility to make sure you follow this policy. You must always act in a professional way to gain the confidence of all those you deal with.

You must:

- make sure you maintain a good standard of appearance
- carry out reasonable management instructions about the dress code when you are on duty

If you are expected to wear full uniform, you must comply with the standards at all times.

If you fail to comply with the code, you may be subject to disciplinary action in line with the current disciplinary procedures.

Line managers and supervisors

If you are a line manager, it is your responsibility to make sure your staff:

- are aware of the dress code and standards which apply
- follow the code

Process to follow when the standards are not met

If you are a line manager and a member of staff is not following the dress code, you must take immediate action. This may include telling that person to return home to change.

You must consider taking disciplinary action if a member of staff repeatedly fails to follow the dress code and this guidance on the standards of appearance.

You must decide on how suitable someone's dress and appearance are by taking into account the role they are undertaking, including:

- likely extremes of temperature
- health and safety
- hygiene
- ethnicity
- cultural
- religious

- medical provisions

All managers have a responsibility to promote this procedure and challenge officers and staff irrespective of department.

For more information on uniform standards, see: IE uniform and non-uniform policy.

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Purpose of the dress code

This page tells criminal investigators in Immigration Enforcement Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) teams about the aims, general principle and specific objectives of the dress code.

Aims

The aim is to set the expected standards of dress and appearance for all staff engaged in criminal investigation duties. Clothing must be clean, smart business attire and suitable to the role.

General principle

All Immigration Enforcement criminal investigation staff must present a professional image that will reinforce public confidence.

Objectives

The specific objectives are to:

- provide a professional and consistent image of criminal investigation staff in Immigration Enforcement to colleagues and the general public
- develop public confidence in the service provided by criminal investigation staff
make everyone aware of what is acceptable to wear

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Risk assessment and health and safety considerations

This page tells criminal investigators in Immigration Enforcement Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) teams about risk assessment, equality legislation and health and safety considerations in relation to the dress code.

A risk assessment of work activity is required to comply with health and safety legislation.

You must wear the personal protective equipment (PPE) recommended if the risk assessment process identifies it is needed.

For more information, see:

- IE uniform and non-uniform policy
- IE Operational Safety Policy and Guidance
- National Risk Assessments (NRAs)
- Safe systems of work

Equality legislation

The dress code is compliant with the [Equality Act 2010](#) and the protected characteristics of:

- age
- disability
- gender
- marriage and civil partnerships
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion
- sexual orientation

As a manager you must comply with equality legislation by considering the following:

- maternity
- religious beliefs:
 - customs and practices may require staff to dress or adopt an appearance in a certain way
- reasonable adjustments required under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, see: [Disability Discrimination Act 2005](#)

Maternity

You can dress in maternity wear at any time during your pregnancy to meet your personal needs.

Religious and cultural needs

You can wear clothes relating to your religious or cultural needs providing they meet the general requirement in standards of dress.

As a manager you must make sure you consider these needs wherever practical.

Legislation

This policy supports legislation and guidelines contained in the:

- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Data Protection Act 1998](#)
- [Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- [Health and Safety at Work Act 1974](#)

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Clothing

This page tells criminal investigators in Immigration Enforcement Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) teams about the type of clothing that is acceptable.

You must dress in a manner that is suitable and appropriate to the role. You are expected to maintain a high standard of personal appearance at all times. A professional image is important when dealing with:

- colleagues
- other internal customers
- members of the public

When you are in the office

Both male and female staff must wear smart clothing when they are representing criminal investigation.

For circumstances when it is not appropriate to wear smart or formal clothing, for example if you are covertly deployed, please see 'covert operations' below.

The following list is not exhaustive but will help to explain the definition of smart. Items that are not considered smart are:

- denim jeans
- t-shirts
- frayed or torn clothing
- sportswear or beachwear, including football and rugby shirts
- Lycra, although leggings can be worn with dresses or long smart tops
- shorts, including three quarter length shorts (three quarter length tailored trousers are allowed)
- flip flops, beach sandals or Crocs
- miniskirts or dresses above knee length
- inappropriate revealing clothing, such as bare mid-rift or low-cut top
- baseball caps or hats
- underwear as outerwear
- vest tops, halter neck tops or strapless tops
- hooded tops
- all clothing with inappropriate logos or those that are likely to cause offence, unsuitable is defined as:
 - rude
 - offensive
 - lewd
 - crude
 - discriminatory
 - political
 - violent
 - intimidating

Working from home or at any other location

Officers working from home or at any other location are still representing the Home Office, for instance when on Teams meetings, and are expected to maintain a high standard of personal appearance.

Home Office issued uniform

If you have been issued with Home Office Immigration Enforcement uniform, you must comply with the uniform standard when required to wear uniform.

For more information about uniform standards, see: IE uniform and non-uniform policy which covers the official uniform used across Immigration Enforcement.

Covert operations

If you are covertly deployed or there is an operational need, and it is not suitable to dress formally, casual clothing may be worn at the discretion of the Grade 7 Assistant Director. In these circumstances, the requirement to maintain the other standards defined in this code may also be relaxed.

If you work in covert situations, you should wear suitable clothing. However, when working on Home Office premises you will be expected to present a professional image and follow this dress code.

Identity cards

You must wear your Home Office personal identity card at all times when in Home Office premises except where it would compromise your role, however, you must have it available for inspection. When on official duties in public settings you must carry and produce your Immigration Enforcement warrant card to identify yourself to the public.

See also information on:

- [general appearance](#)
- [sunglasses and spectacles](#)
- [make up and cosmetics](#)

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General appearance

This page tells criminal investigators in Immigration Enforcement Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) teams about the general appearance that is expected and is appropriate for criminal investigators.

Headwear

You may wear headwear which is worn as a religious observance (for example, hijabs or turbans) or for a reason related to a disability (for example head coverings), provided it does not compromise:

- your health and safety
- the use of any personal protective equipment (PPE) provided

Headwear must be neat and presentable, and the material chosen must be navy blue or black, not patterned and must not have a lace or beaded trim. Sikh officers are able to wear either a white or royal blue detsar. You must wear headwear in such a way that your face remains visible.

Face coverings

You should not wear clothing covering your face if you are in an operational post interacting with the public. If you wear facial coverings for religious reasons you must remove them when on duty. This makes sure you, as a member of staff, are identifiable.

An exception to this can be made on the grounds of safety where a risk is identified, for example, communicable disease, that necessitates the wearing of issued protective face masks or headwear. Common sense applies if you are in the immediate pursuit of an offender.

For more information, see: National Risk Assessments (NRAs).

Footwear

Your footwear must be smart and clean and appropriate for the role you are performing.

Trainers are not appropriate irrespective of colour.

Hair

Your hair must be neat and styles that may detract from a professional image are not acceptable. Hair colour must be appropriate to the work environment and conspicuously 'unnatural' colours (for example pink) are not allowed.

Facial hair

Full beards and moustaches are allowed, however an unshaven or stubble appearance is not. You must grow facial hair at a time that minimises the period when you present an unprofessional image. If you are deployed on any covert operation, you are exempt from this requirement.

Jewellery (when on operational duties)

Certain items of jewellery such as necklaces, rings and bracelets may increase the risk of

- injury
- assault
- harm

When a risk assessment identifies that an injury is likely to happen you must remove the item or minimise the risk.

You must not wear bracelets, ankle chains or necklaces during operational duties unless you have permission on religious grounds. You can wear rings but if they have sharp edges or projections such as set stones, you must make them safe or remove them.

Body piercing

You must not wear items of jewellery through the:

- nose
- eyebrows
- lips
- tongue
- any other visible part of the body other than the ear lobe

Tattoos

You must have a general appearance that is in keeping with the professional image of the Home Office. Tattoos are allowed but must be of a nature, which does not discredit the organisation.

Tattoos are seen to be inappropriate if they could cause offence and/or invite provocation from members of the public or colleagues. Inappropriate tattoos must not be visible, and you must not have any new tattoos on your neck, face or hands.

If you are on duty representing criminal investigation, you must cover any visible tattoos wherever possible and practical.

See also information on:

- [clothing](#)
- [sunglasses and spectacles](#)
- [make up and cosmetics](#)

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Sunglasses and spectacles

This page tells criminal investigators in Immigration Enforcement Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) teams about the acceptable style of sunglasses and spectacles.

Spectacles and sunglasses must be of a suitable, discreet pattern.

You can wear sunglasses at your own risk, but you must not wear them when speaking to a member of the public (except on medical grounds).

Your sunglasses must comply with British safety standards and must be in keeping with the general standard of dress. Sunglasses must:

- be shatterproof
- not be mirrored
- not be bright in colour

See also information on:

- [clothing](#)
- [general appearance](#)
- [make up and cosmetics](#)

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Make up and cosmetics

This page tells criminal investigators in Immigration Enforcement Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) teams about the wearing of makeup and cosmetics.

You may wear cosmetics in moderation, of a colour and type appropriate for the work environment.

If you suffer from a skin condition that requires a deeper cover of makeup you must discuss this with your line manager or supervisor.

You can wear clear nail varnish or a traditional French manicure. You must remove all other colours.

Nails must be short and neat.

See also information on:

- [clothing](#)
- [general appearance](#)
- [sunglasses and spectacles](#)

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