# Police ordered not to celebrate Pride or wear rainbow pins



A recent High Court ruling has found that police officers acted unlawfully by participating in a Pride festival while in uniform, a decision which has led forces across the country to reconsider how they engage with such events to maintain impartiality. The legal challenge specifically involved Northumbria Police's involvement in the 2024 Newcastle Pride in the City event, where officers took part visibly in uniform. According to the court, this participation created an impression of bias, potentially undermining public trust in the police as impartial enforcers of the law.

The case was brought by Linzi Smith, a gender-critical lesbian who argues that sex is immutable. She challenged the chief constable of Northumbria Police for their support of the Pride event, a complaint that the High Court upheld. This ruling has wider implications beyond Northumbria; various regional forces including Thames Valley Police have since adjusted their policies accordingly.

Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Barber expressed support for adhering to the ruling, emphasising the importance of police neutrality in the execution of their duties. Assistant Chief Constable Dennis Murray confirmed that Thames Valley Police officers could only attend Pride events in uniform while performing their policing roles, doing so with impartiality and professionalism. Any attendance outside of operational duties must be in a personal capacity, and officers are asked not to wear uniform in such situations. This approach attempts to balance the duty of impartiality with respect for individual rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights.

Barber further clarified that the only flags displayed on police buildings should be the Union Flag or the force’s own standard, explicitly ruling out the flying of the Pride flag. This stance places Thames Valley Police in contrast with other emergency services in the region, such as Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue, who have shown visible support for Pride by flying the rainbow flag on their vehicles. Barber noted that the fire service’s decisions on symbolically displaying the flag are for them to determine and stated that the police's core focus remains on crime prevention and public safety, not participating in cultural or political debates.

Other forces have taken comparable steps following the ruling. North Yorkshire Police, for instance, has barred off-duty officers from wearing uniforms at Pride parades to maintain impartiality. Similarly, Northumbria Police has prohibited officers from displaying transgender colours or rainbow livery on police vehicles. These measures underline a growing trend among police forces to reassess their visible roles in Pride events to uphold public confidence in their impartiality.

Despite these restrictions, both Oxford Pride and the police's LGBT+ network have yet to comment publicly on the implications of the ruling and the changes it necessitates in police participation at Pride events. Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25477880.pride-flag-ban-important-impartiality-says-police-boss/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2025-07-17/police-participation-in-pride-event-ruled-unlawful-by-high-court-judge> - A High Court judge ruled that Northumbria Police acted unlawfully by allowing officers to participate in the Newcastle Pride in the City event in 2024. The case was brought by Linzi Smith, a gender-critical lesbian, who argued that the officers' involvement breached impartiality rules. The judge found that the participation of uniformed officers could give the impression of bias, potentially undermining public trust in the force's impartiality. The ruling has significant implications for police participation in Pride events nationwide.
3. <https://www.gbnews.com/news/north-yorkshire-police-off-duty-officers-ban-wearing-uniform-pride> - Following a High Court ruling that Northumbria Police acted unlawfully by allowing officers to participate in a Pride event, North Yorkshire Police's Chief Constable, Tim Forber, has banned off-duty officers from wearing uniforms at Pride parades. Forber emphasized the importance of police impartiality and stated that only officers on duty and actively policing such events would be permitted to wear uniforms. This decision reflects a broader trend of forces reassessing their participation in Pride events to maintain public trust.
4. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/northumbria-police-high-court-police-justice-pride-b2791758.html> - Northumbria Police has instructed off-duty officers participating in Pride events to avoid wearing items that identify them as police personnel. This directive follows a High Court ruling that the force acted unlawfully by allowing officers to participate in the 2024 Newcastle Pride in the City event. The ruling, brought by Linzi Smith, a gender-critical lesbian, found that the officers' involvement could compromise the force's impartiality. The new guidelines aim to ensure that police participation does not appear biased.
5. <https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/07/16/northumbria-police-pride-lgbtq/> - The High Court ruled that Northumbria Police's participation in the 2024 Newcastle Pride in the City event was unlawful, as it breached duties of impartiality. The case, brought by Linzi Smith, a gender-critical lesbian, argued that the force's involvement could give the impression of bias, undermining public trust. The ruling has prompted other police forces to reassess their participation in Pride events to maintain impartiality and public confidence.
6. <https://www.gbnews.com/news/northumbria-police-pride-ruling-officers-banned-trans-linzi-smith> - Following a landmark High Court ruling that Northumbria Police acted unlawfully by allowing officers to participate in a Pride event, the force has banned officers from displaying transgender colours and removed rainbow Pride livery from police vehicles. The ruling, brought by Linzi Smith, a gender-critical lesbian, found that the force's participation could compromise its impartiality. The new measures aim to ensure that police involvement in Pride events does not appear biased.