

Flags and Emblems Policy

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VERSION CONTROL RECORD

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2.0	HR Management Team	15.08.17	No changes
2.1	HR Compliance & Governance Officer	Oct 2021	Added section to include information on some common emblems that indicate someone has a disability and may need more assistance and Pride.
	Equality & Diversity Advisor HR Management Team	Nov 2021	Additions approved by HR Management Team

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1. Introduction

Throughout this Policy, the words 'Translink' 'Company' and/or 'the Group' refer to all corporate entities under the ownership of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC). This includes the parent Company and each subsidiary either individually or taken together as a group.

2. Scope

This policy on flags and emblems is related to Translink's Equal Opportunity Policy and its Dignity at Work Policy.

In its Equal Opportunity Policy, the Company states that:

- Translink is committed to the provision of equality of opportunity and to a proactive and inclusive approach to equality, which supports and encourages all under-represented groups, promotes an inclusive culture, values diversity, and secures fair participation throughout its workforce for all employees and applicants.
- As an equal opportunity employer our aim is to create a working environment in which the abilities of all employees are utilized to the full. Equal opportunity is about good employment practices and efficient use of our most valuable asset, our employees. Every manager and employee has personal responsibility for the implementation of this policy. We will not discriminate unlawfully, either directly or indirectly, against any individual in matters of recruitment, dismissal, selection for redundancy or promotion, transfer, development or training, pay and, benefits, facilities, procedures and all other aspects of employment.
- Translink has a duty to promote a good and harmonious working environment and atmosphere in which no employee feels under threat or intimidated, will take all reasonable steps to ensure that those who work in the organisation, or come in contact with it (as a client, customer or user of its services or facilities) do not feel threatened or intimidated and will eliminate any conditions, procedures and individual behaviour that can lead to or cause discrimination even where there was is/no intention to discriminate.
- Each employee has a responsibility to accept personal involvement in the practical application of the Translink Equal Opportunity Policy and Dignity at Work Policy and has individual responsibility to help the Company to secure and maintain a good and harmonious working environment.

3. Flags

The Company flies the Union Flag on Head Offices on official days, designated as such by Government.

Symbols with the potential to disrupt a good and harmonious working environment.

Personal emblems – there are some individual emblems and symbols that through our history and associations, and whether intended or not, have come to have a significance that has the potential to make those of a different identity feel uncomfortable and unwelcome.

In this category are likely to fall a variety of symbols and emblems with the potential to cause disharmony and especially those that have been directly linked to community conflict in Northern Ireland and/or to local politics. These include:

- Football shirts, e.g., Rangers and Celtic
- Badges and insignia linked to paramilitary or political organisations, e.g., buttonholes, tattoos
- Badges and insignia, e.g., Easter lilies, Orange symbols
- Posters, displays, tracts, emblems, screen savers, ring tones, car stickers etc linked to the above

In many other contexts these and other symbols may be wholly acceptable, e.g., football shirts worn to/or at a football match or political emblems displayed at a political event, but within the workplace and workplace organised events such emblems may have the potential to cause unnecessary tension and be divisive.

4. Workplace Emblems

Certain symbols and emblems which, if their display is sanctioned within the workplace, may help create an environment that is perceived to be more welcoming to one community than the other, whether intended or not. Examples of these may include:

- Posters, pictures, portraits and displays that contain or incorporate emblems more closely associated with one or other of the communities; or
- Religious tracts and emblems

It is impossible to provide a definitive list with regard to such symbols and emblems at any particular point in time, given their variety and the range of situation in which they are found.

Emblems and symbols which are not likely to disrupt a good and harmonious working environment

There are many ways in which people convey their religious and political identity to others. In this category would fall emblems which may be associated primarily with one religion or community but are not directly linked to community conflict. Such marks of identity are unlikely to be regarded as creating an intimidating or hostile working environment. Examples include:

- Marks of religious observance, insignia associated with organisations attached primarily to one religion, community or culture, e.g., crosses or crucifixes and ashes, kippot, turbans, Muslim veils, Pioneer pins, Christian Union badges, Fainnes, dreadlocks
- Marks of remembrance, celebration or commemoration, e.g., poppies (see Company Guidelines on Wearing & Selling Poppies below), shamrocks

Where such marks of identity are displayed with decorum and, if appropriate during the designated time and with a sense of due proportion they are unlikely to create or sustain a hostile environment.

It would be unacceptable, however, if an individual was made to feel uncomfortable for wearing or not wearing any of these emblems or if these emblems were being flaunted before or forced on someone for not wearing them.

Many of our employees are required to wear Company uniform or workwear and in so doing may wear a Company ID badge or Trade Union membership badge.

Where this policy refers to the wearing of emblems employees should note that the principles outlined refer equally to outer wear garments as well as clothing worn in the workplace.

5. Other Considerations

In drawing up this policy the Company has made due reference to the Equality Commission's Guide for Employers and Employees – Promoting a Good and Harmonious Working Environment.

The principles outlined in this Policy apply not only to particular religious beliefs and political opinions but also to other grounds of difference between individuals such as race, sex, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation and age.

As such, there are other emblems that employees may choose to display that raise awareness or demonstrate support for these other equality grounds. Some examples include:

- Just A Minute (JAM) Card - allows people with a learning difficulty, autism, or communication barrier to tell others they need 'Just A Minute' discreetly and easily.
- Sunflower Lanyard/Badge (Yellow Sunflower on a green background) – Indicates that the wearer of this emblem has a hidden disability or is a carer to someone with a disability. This individual may require a little help, more time or may be exempt from certain rules (for example, wearing of face coverings during the Covid-19 pandemic).
- PRIDE badge / Lanyard – the wearer of this emblem is demonstrating support for the LGBT+ community.

Where such marks of identity/support are displayed with decorum and, if appropriate during the designated time and with a sense of due proportion they are unlikely to create or sustain a hostile environment.

It would be unacceptable, however, if an individual was made to feel uncomfortable for wearing or not wearing any of these particular emblems or if these emblems were being flaunted before or forced on someone for not wearing them.

The Company will keep the operation and effectiveness of this policy under regular review and may amend its content from time to time, if necessary, in order to ensure compliance with legal requirements and best practice.

6. Related Policies

Employees may find it useful to review other related policies in conjunction with the Flags & Emblems Policy. These include:

- Equal Opportunity Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Company Guidelines on the Wearing and Selling of Poppies