

# Quick reference guide: professional interaction

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Remember to be guided by the [Code of Ethics](#) and the [National Decision Model](#) in all of your encounters with the public.

Applicable to:

- All stop and search powers (whether or not requiring reasonable grounds for suspicion)

Except where there is specific reference to 'search', the guidance on professional interaction also applies to:

- Section 163 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 vehicle stops
- Police community support officer powers to search for and seize alcohol and tobacco under the Police Reform Act 2002
- Stop and account

## Think about how you are coming across to the person you wish to search and any other member of the public who is present

- Are your words, tone and body language measured and non-threatening?
- Are you using active listening skills as appropriate (for example, making eye contact, nodding and asking follow-up questions).

## Explain to the person in a manner they understand what you are doing and why

- Have you followed the GOWISELY procedure? This must be done before starting the search, even if you are known to the person.
- If you are acting under [section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994](#) (CJPOA), have you provided the person with details of the authorisation?
- Have you checked that the person understands what is happening?
- Have you given the person an opportunity to tell their side of the story?

## Treat the person with dignity and respect

- Be polite and encourage cooperation.
- If the person is unwilling to cooperate, be proportionate in your response and use the minimum level of force necessary to conduct the search.
- Does the person have individual needs or vulnerabilities for which allowance should be made in order to minimise the impact of the encounter?

If the person to be searched appears to be vulnerable or have a particular need, you should:

- identify and assess the vulnerability
- if in doubt, check that the person understands what is proposed
- consider seeking the assistance of an appropriate person (such as a carer, interpreter or appropriate adult)
- take the vulnerability into account when considering proportionality and necessity of the measures to be taken

If the person to be searched is a child, you should:

- consider the safety and welfare of the child – should a safeguarding referral be made or police protection powers be used?
- adopt a manner appropriate to the child's age
- remember that you are the professional and it is up to you to defuse the situation if the child is being provocative
- if possible, identify a responsible adult who can assist (for example, parent, guardian, family member, carer or other appropriate adult)
- ensure that information about making a complaint is given in a format appropriate to their age, orally as well as in writing

Where it is necessary to stop and search a child under 10, the search should take place in a safe and controlled area as a minimum, if possible in the presence of an appropriate adult. All searches of children under 10 should be referred to the safeguarding team as a priority.

If you need to conduct a search exposing intimate parts of the body of a child or vulnerable person, an appropriate adult must be present (Code C, Annex A, paragraph 11).

## Remember

- You should be in uniform to stop a vehicle under stop and search powers or to exercise the power under [section 60 of the CJPOA](#).
- When recording ethnicity as part of the search record, you should explain that the information is required to monitor disproportionality and ensure that stop and search is used in a fair and effective way.
- Close the encounter in an appropriate manner before moving on to other tasks – this should include explaining to the person how they can complain, in accordance with force policy.

## Tags

Stop and search