

Stop and search – have your say

Published on 13 April 2026

We're consulting on updated guidance for police use of stop and search powers

Consultation 2 mins read

We're inviting views on updated authorised professional practice (APP) for stop and search in England and Wales.

Stop and search is one of policing's most scrutinised powers. When used appropriately and professionally, it plays an important role in keeping communities safe, helping officers take dangerous weapons and drugs off the streets, recover stolen items, and identify vulnerability at what can be a critical safeguarding moment.

But when stop and search is used inappropriately, not clearly justified, or delivered without professionalism, it can undermine trust between the police and the communities they serve.

Official data shows that black people, children and young people, and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are consistently stopped and searched at disproportionately higher rates than others. These disparities make it essential that stop and search is consistently fair, necessary and respectful.

Why we're updating the guidance

This updated APP responds directly to a number of significant investigations and reports that have identified where policing must do better. These include:

- the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) [investigation into the strip search of Child Q](#) (2022)
- an investigation into the Criminal Justice Alliance's [super-complaint on Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and independent community scrutiny of stop and search](#) (2023)

- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) [spotlight report on disproportionate use of police powers](#) (2021)

What's changed

The updated APP is child-centred and addresses disproportionality affecting children, young people and other vulnerable groups. It strengthens safeguarding requirements and places greater emphasis on the quality of the encounter itself, not just whether a search takes place, but how it is conducted.

Specifically, the updated APP:

- places greater focus on communication, helping officers explain clearly why a search is taking place and treating people with dignity and respect throughout
- provides guidance on de-escalation, recognising that how officers engage can significantly affect the outcome of an encounter and its impact on community trust
- sets clear expectations on the use of force, emphasising that force should only ever be used when necessary and proportionate
- makes clear that handcuffs must never be used routinely during stop and search, their use requires specific justification in every case
- encourages officers to recognise stop and search as a moment to identify vulnerability and connect people with safeguarding support

The updated APP is simpler, organised by rank and role, and uses practical examples to help officers, particularly those newer to the role, understand what to do in different situations.

Working with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), we have drawn on innovative practice identified by HMICFRS to set higher, clearer standards across forces.

We are also improving how forces use stop and search data and strengthening community oversight to create a more consistent approach across forces.

The improvements are designed to ensure that every officer understands not just what they can do, but what they should do, grounding every decision in fairness, necessity and respect, in line with our [Code of Ethics](#).

Have your say

Whether you work in policing, a partner agency or a community organisation, or have personal experience of stop and search, we want to hear from you.

Your feedback will help shape guidance that is fair, effective and enables officers to prevent crime, recognise vulnerability and keep communities safe.

Our consultation closes on Monday 6 July 2026.

To have your say, read the consultation document and complete the online questionnaire.

- [Go to the stop and search APP consultation](#)
- [Complete the online questionnaire](#)

Tags

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