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Title	Screening Arches
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Summary	This SOP provides guidance on the deployment and use of Screening Arches
Branch / OCU	TP Patrol OCU
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Introduction

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) supports the MPS Policy on Stop & Search. It provides guidance on the deployment and use of screening arches and handheld detection devices (also known as wands) as part of the MPS strategy to tackle weapon related crime. In formulating this SOP, consultation has taken place both within the MPS and with outside agencies/partners. It should be read in conjunction with guidance and SOP's already published relating to stop and search / stop and account. Particular reference should be paid to the Operation Blunt 2 Screening Arch Deployment (Notes for Guidance).

Application

This SOP is applicable from the date of publication.

All police officers and police staff, including the extended police family and those working voluntarily or under contract to the MPA must be aware of, and are required to comply with, all relevant MPS policy and associated procedures.

However, this SOP applies in particular to officers and staff in the following roles:

- Front line personnel
- Officers involved in policing disorder
- Dedicated search officers

N.B. This list is not intended to be exhaustive

Overview

The term screening arch is preferred to other labels such as search arch or knife arch etc as the process of passing through the arch is not a search and may also detect metal objects in addition to knives. Screening equipment is not a panacea but should be considered as part of the operational toolkit in making London safe. Screening plays an important role in current strategy both at Borough/Operational Command Unit (B/OCU) level and when policing large public order events. The equipment is not infallible and is designed to provide an indication only. The efficacy of screening arches is affected by many factors including how they are calibrated and the experience of those operating them.

The deployment of screening arches is a useful tactic to :

- Disrupt, detect and deter those committing Knife Enabled Robbery and Violence against the Person
- Create a safe environment for the public that is free from crime, the fear of crime and intimidation.
- Provide public reassurance

Screening serves the joint purpose of detecting those carrying knives and other weapons whilst affording reassurance to communities that the MPS is doing all that it can. Screening

arch operations also provide a unique opportunity for personal interaction with the community and it is recommended that the MPS does not overlook the positive benefit to community relations that such operations present. In order to maximise the public reassurance that such operations provide, careful consideration should be given to appropriate media strategy. The desire to promote the positive action that the MPS is taking to tackle weapons related crime must be balanced against the impact of press interest on those members of the community who agreed to be screened.

It is accepted that the detection of offences will vary but finding weapons is not the only criteria by which to measure success. Such visible methods and the reassurance they provide continue to be supported by the majority of the public. The maintenance of community confidence is paramount and the detection of any weapons cannot be regarded as success if it is achieved at the cost of undermining the communities trust and confidence in the MPS. Careful consideration and robust supervision must accompany the use of screening arches and other such equipment. Consultation with communities (E.g. meeting with ward panels, Independent Advisory Group (IAG) members, stop & search local monitoring groups etc) prior to a screening arch operation taking place is important to explain the rationale for the operation and obtain their support.

The Encounter

The purpose of screening activity by police is to tackle weapons-related criminality. It is MPS policy that whenever practicable, everyone in a given locality should be invited to be screened. It is recognised there will be occasions when due to police resource issues it will not be practical to screen everyone and there will be a degree of selection. The responsibility for this decision rests with the officer in charge of the operation. Certain sections of the community may feel that they will be unduly targeted. In order to obviate any such accusations it is vital that staff conducting operations engage with members of the community and remind them that the overall aim is to combat serious assaults with weapons. It is incontrovertible that the profile of victims of knife and gun crime follows a narrow span in terms of gender and ethnicity. The MPS is committed to preventing incidents that lead to death or serious injury. Any selection of potential screening participants may necessarily result in some disproportionality in terms of overall demographics.

Members of the community must continue to be treated with respect and dignity that they have a right to expect. But screening operations, in order to be effective, must be conducted in a pragmatic, focussed way and proper explanation provided to those who are inconvenienced. Officers should reassure people screened and observers (verbally and by leafleting) explaining that screening operations reduce crime and criminality, making London safer.

Screening arch operations appear to have the support of communities as they tackle knife crime and other weapons related assault, this community support ought not to be undermined as long as the MPS acts reasonably and responsibly.

The quality of the encounter with the person being screened is pivotal to maintaining public support for the use of screening devices. It is important that they are dealt with politely and considerately.

The MPS Quality of Service Principles underpin all screening encounters:

- Introduce yourself
- Find out what people need and provide it
- Explain what is going to happen next
- Give a reference and contact number
- Keep people informed by providing regular updates

Whilst officers are trying to achieve a lawful purpose they must also be mindful that they may be dealing with someone who is vulnerable due to their age, physical or mental disability, disfigurement, religious or personal reasons. Having considered the sensitivities and vulnerability of the person, it is necessary to balance the likelihood of discovering a dangerous instrument or offensive weapon to the potential harm you may cause to the person.

In terms of disability, it is pointless requesting someone who is a wheelchair user to pass through an arch as the sensors will clearly be activated by the wheelchair. It is of course possible to use a hand held detection device to isolate certain areas and thereby to conduct a viable scanning process.

Independent observers should be utilised whenever possible to ensure fairness and promote community trust and confidence in police screening arch operations.

A Community Impact Assessment is recommended for all pre-planned screening operations and is mandatory where section 60 powers are invoked.

Equipment

Screening arches must be approved by the Home Office as suitable for operational police usage. SO15 Police Search Advisors (POLSA) have considerable expertise in screening arch operations, they have a number of screening arches available for deployment together with Licensed Search Officers. OCU's who wish to purchase additional arches must contact the Patrol OCU before considering acting in isolation to purchase their own. It should be noted that consideration must be given for the storage, maintenance, calibration and potential repair of any equipment in addition to issues of handling, transportation and the provision of appropriate training for staff (see below).

It is important that equipment is assembled, maintained and operated by staff who have been properly trained. The suppliers of the screening products have trained a number of staff and this instruction is suitable for cascading to others. If any training issues arise or B/OCU's find that, perhaps due to staff movements that they have insufficient capability, it is advised that contact is made with the Patrol OCU.

Practical issues and deployment

It is expected that, in general, screening equipment will be used as part of pre-planned operations. Careful preparation will ensure that such activity is conducted by officers who are properly supervised and briefed, at a location which is both supported by intelligence and is a safe environment for all parties. All B/OCU's have Licensed Search Officers and a Single Point Of Contact who co-ordinates their deployment. The planning of screening operations should take place only following consultation with such skilled, trained and licensed personnel.

It is MPS policy that whenever practicable, everyone in a given locality should be invited to be screened. It is recognised there will be occasions when due to police resource issues it will not be practical to screen everyone and there will be a degree of selection. The responsibility for this decision rests with the officer in charge of the operation.

- When there is selection of persons to be screened, officers will be assisted in exercising their assessment by focussing on the purpose of the operation. The following key points are salient to this sensitive but critical issue:
- The selection of people for screening will reflect the intelligence profile for that locality,
- By being intelligence led in this way any apparent disproportionality can be explained and police action justified,
- The accurate and thorough completion of the associated screening arch record permits the MPS to monitor this aspect and demonstrates transparency

Annex A includes useful guidance and although not an exhaustive list, the following key points will assist in the planning and successful execution of screening operations:

- Any screening arch operation must be intelligence-led but it is appropriate that OCU's adopt a broad interpretation of this requirement,
- Consideration should always be given to the use of powers under section 60 CJPO Act 1994, where prior intelligence permits. This reinforces the message that operations are targeted, not random and has practical advantages in terms of personal searching powers,
- Where an operation is intended on private premises, including schools and transport hubs those in ownership or control of those premise must have been consulted and be in agreement. A written record should be kept of who was consulted,
- BTP Chief Inspector Operations must be informed at least 7 days in advance if the MPS plans to hold operations within their jurisdiction,
- TfL must be notified by e-mail to OperationsTL@met.police.uk at least 7 days in advance of any screening operation that may impact on the transport network
- Borough Licensed Search Officers should be used when available to advise on all aspects of an operation,

- A suitable location must take into account the local geography and the effect on the community and transport network. A 'site visit' must have taken place to ensure that the intended location is appropriate, that it can accommodate all of the additional equipment (barriers, sterile area, cordons etc),
- Such a visit should identify 'dump sites' and other locations where weapons may be hidden,
- The transport system should not be disrupted / delayed by police operations. Screening or searching should not take place on a bus. If it is necessary to search or screen a passenger, they should first be removed from the bus. Buses should not be delayed for more than 2 minutes,
- Officers with local knowledge (e.g. suitable Borough Intelligence Unit staff) to act as spotters will clearly maximise the opportunity to detect offences and minimise the disruption to others
- It is clearly vital to identify people who seek to avoid being screened (often termed turn-aways or turn-arounds). Such people may be reluctant for a number of reasons but such obvious behaviour is likely to merit further investigation.
- It is advisable to ensure that arches are properly calibrated before an operation and that staff have had an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the equipment,
- Persons to be screened should be asked to remove any metal object beforehand,
- At the conclusion, a weapons-sweep of the locality should take place prior to a thorough de-brief,
- Consideration should be given to conducting operations in areas where the process can be captured on CCTV. Whilst not mandatory such a record of the operation increases accountability and protects officers from unmerited allegations. It is suggested that members of B/OCU Senior Management Team's and/or the stop lead for boroughs make regular attendance at pre-planned operations to provide visible leadership and appropriate supervision.

Legality

It cannot be overstated that in a public place there is no power to demand that any person passes through a screening arch or be subject to screening by a hand held device (wand). Members of the public therefore do so entirely voluntarily. The MPS has sought legal advice on the status of the screening process and, whilst it is a matter of fact for a court to determine, the advice supports the view that it does not constitute a search. Furthermore, a request to remove metallic objects prior to passing through the screen is deemed to be part of the screening process and is also not a search as defined in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act or other legislation.

Should a person refuse to pass through a screening arch this does not in itself provide reasonable grounds to conduct a manual search. It is clearly a factor which may influence an officer in establishing 'reasonable grounds' and is likely to lead to questioning or other investigative measures, but it is not grounds alone to justify a search. It is important to reiterate that powers to search any person and officer safety guidance remain entirely

unaffected by screening arches and their use. (Refer to the Stop & Search SOP's for further information on searches of persons)

Where it is intended that screening operations will be conducted as a condition of entry to private premises this must be supported by a formal agreement between the MPS and the other parties.

Accountability and documentation

It is paramount that the MPS deploys screening in a manner which is reasonable so that it continues to have the support of the wider community. In order to allow the MPS to monitor any disproportionality (as required by the Race Relations Act 1976 as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005) and to assist in engaging with all communities, details of those who are screened must be recorded.

Forms have been provided for this purpose and at the conclusion of the operation a Screen Arch Return must be completed.

Two leaflets have been produced (to be given out to people screened and passers by) which explain the MPS's overall approach to tackling knife crime and the screening arch process and powers. These are available in English, they can be downloaded from the Stop and Search Team internal website and printed off in whatever font size is required.

Quantitative and qualitative evaluation and scrutiny of screening arch operations should take place. Qualitative measures include community confidence and reassurance, quantitative measures include identifying any disproportionality, number of arrests, weapons seized etc. Involvement of the community (Local Stop & Search monitoring groups etc) is a vital part of this process.

Transport for London (TfL) must be provided with a debrief of any operation that takes place on TfL property, including numbers of stops, searches and Penalty Notice for Disorder (PND) issues etc. It should also include an assessment of the overall success of the operation and any informal feedback from staff/passengers. The de-brief should be sent to OperationsTL@met.police.uk

Health and Safety

Of primary importance is the safety, both of members of the community, and MPS staff. It is imperative that all operational planning must have this issue at its forefront. In addition to any specific considerations concerning safety, the following are essential factors:

- All police officers and PCSO's engaged in a screening operation must be Officer Safety Trained and be in possession of their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- A risk assessment must accompany the operational plan and this must include the role of and contingency around any independent observers,

- Particular care must be exercised in positioning a screening arch to allow for sufficient space not only for the screening process but with due regard to the management of the potentially large number of people in its environs.
- Avoid placing arches in locations that block exit routes, fire escapes or other vital through-fares. This is particularly critical at transport hubs, train stations and the like.
- Screening arches are not waterproof. They can be damaged by the ingress of water and therefore are not suitable to be deployed in the rain. Tents or other apparatus to keep the arches dry are recommended.
- Plain clothes officers acting as spotters must be known to all of the other staff involved in the operation. This is best achieved by ensuring that the plain-clothes officers are introduced at the pre-operational briefing.
- Any MPS member who, as part of a pre-planned operation, is working beyond the ticket barriers at train and underground stations must be 'track-side trained' meaning that they have received suitable training by TFL.
- Anybody involved in the transportation and assembly of screening equipment must be trained in manual handling,
- With regard to the charging of batteries and other electrical maintenance, guidance must be sought from Property Services Department concerning the correct and safe method and the necessary equipment.
- The process of screening, through an arch or by handheld device is entirely safe: research indicates that it presents no risk to any person. This is also the case with persons who have medical implants fitted (such as heart pace-makers). However the appropriate warning notice must be prominently displayed at all screening arch operations.

Given that many screening operations are likely to take place at transport hubs, the advice and guidance of local Safer Transport Team is recommended.

Responsibilities

The Stop & Search Strategic Committee is responsible for Ownership of this SOP.

OCU Commanders, supervisors and operational officers are responsible for implementing this SOP.

TP Patrol OCU Stops & Searches team are responsible for monitoring and reviewing this SOP.

Associated Documents and Policies

Policy on MPS Stops & Searches

Principles of Stop & Search SOP

Search prior to arrest SOP

Stop & Account SOP

Section 60 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 SOP

The Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 Code of Practice – Code A

For further enquiries and feedback on this SOP please contact TPHQ Stops and Searches team <mailto:StopsandSearches-TPHQ@met.police.uk> or telephone extension 780967.