

Searches at police stations

Stop and search is a legitimate power that is used by the MPS to protect Londoners, tackle crime and keep our streets safe.

It may be necessary for police to conduct a search at a nearby police station in situations where a more thorough search is required to find an article suspected of being concealed on the body, for which police are empowered to search.

The Metropolitan Police Service requires that a supervisor (normally the duty officer or patrol sergeant) must be notified and give their authority prior to a person being taken to a nearby police station for a more thorough search. In such circumstances, the supervisor must satisfy themselves the search will be lawful, proportionate, necessary and fair before giving their authorisation.

It is the responsibility of the local stop and search lead officer to nominate a private room within a police station to carry out more through searches.

PACE Code A 3.7 provides guidance on the conduct of searches at police stations. Searches involving exposure of intimate parts of the body must not be conducted as a routine extension of a less thorough search, simply because nothing is found in the course of the initial search. Searches must be carried out in accordance with the following elements of paragraph 11 of Annex A to Code C:

- A police officer carrying out the search must be the same sex as the person searched;
- The search shall take place in an area where the person to be searched cannot be seen by anyone who does not need to be present, nor by a member of the opposite sex, except an appropriate adult who has been specifically requested by the person to be searched;
- Except in cases of urgency, where there is a risk of serious harm to the person searched or to others, whenever a search involves exposure of intimate body parts, there must be at least two people present other than the person to be searched, one of which must be an appropriate adult if the search is of a juvenile (under 18 years' old) or mentally disordered or otherwise mentally vulnerable person. Except in urgent cases as above, a search of a juvenile may take place in the absence of the appropriate adult only if the juvenile signifies in the presence of the appropriate adult that they do not want the adult to be present during the search and the adult agrees. The presence of more than two people, other than an appropriate adult, shall be permitted only in the most exceptional circumstances.
- The search shall be conducted with proper regard to the sensitivity and vulnerability of the person to be searched in these circumstances and every reasonable effort will be made to secure the co-operation of the person to be searched and minimise embarrassment. Persons who are searched should normally be required to remove all their clothes at the same time, e.g. a person should be allowed to remove clothing above the waist and redress before removing further clothing;
- If necessary to assist the search, the person searched may be required to hold their arms in the air or to stand with their legs apart and bend forward so a visual examination may be made of the genital and anal areas provided no physical contact is made with any body orifice;
- The search shall be conducted as quickly as possible, and the person searched allowed to dress as soon as the procedure is complete.

As well as completing a stop and search form, a record of searches at a police station must be made, including details of the authorising supervisor, those present, the result and steps taken to allay any sense of grievance.