

The logo consists of the word "STOPWATCH" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The "O" in "STOP" is replaced by a solid red circle. The background of the entire page features a large red triangle pointing upwards, overlaid on a halftone image of a residential street with cars and houses.

STOPWATCH

STOP & SEARCH


A GUIDE FOR PARENTS & CHILDREN





StopWatch is a coalition which promotes fair, effective and accountable policing, and works to inform the public about the use of stop and search.





**This guide is
for parents,
carers and anyone
who regularly
interacts with or cares
for children and young
people. It has been made
in consultation with
parents' groups, children and
young people who have been
stopped and searched.**

**The guide contains information and
tips to help support children before any
police interaction occurs, immediately
after a stop and search, and over time if
they are stopped repeatedly or have a
particularly negative interaction with the
police.**

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“ When I was asking my son about why he didn't complain, why he didn't get a record of the stop, he said to me, 'Mum, don't mind those,' a kind of Leicester expression for don't bother, because it's just normal. And that worried me. If it's normal for our young people to have an invasion of their rights, to be stopped and searched when they've done nothing wrong, if that's normalized, then what kind of a state are we living in?”

- Karen Chouhan

WHAT IS STOP AND SEARCH?

STOP AND SEARCH IS A POLICE POWER THAT ALLOWS OFFICERS TO DETAIN A PERSON AND SEARCH THEM, USING FORCE IF NECESSARY.

KNOW YOUR CHILD'S RIGHTS



Before a search of your child takes place, the officer should give their name and ID number, say what station they are from, and explain why they are conducting the search and what they are looking for (1).

The officer will feel around inside collars, socks and shoes or headgear if they believe something is hidden and ask your child to turn out their pockets or pat them down.

They can ask your child to remove their outer clothing, such as jackets and scarves, or any other item concealing identity.

An officer may decide to conduct a 'more thorough search', involving the removal of more than outer clothing and gloves. This should take place out of public view – in a police van or at the police station – unless your child consents to the search continuing in public. 'More thorough searches' should be conducted by an officer of the same sex as the person being searched and not in the presence of members of the opposite sex unless requested by your child.

At the end of the search, officers should complete a record and provide a copy of the record or a receipt to the person who has been searched.



ARE THE POLICE ALLOWED TO STOP AND SEARCH MY CHILD?

YES - THERE IS NO AGE LIMIT FOR STOP AND SEARCH. Searches can be carried out in public on children of any age. In our consultations, children as young as eight years old spoke about having been stopped and searched; witnessing others being stopped by police; being scared of the police; and of worrying about being stopped and searched.



There are no specific laws or rules that apply when police stop and search children. Officers are given basic professional guidance that states: 'it is important for the officer to remember that a child should be treated as a child first and foremost, even if they are known to the police or appear older. If that child or young person is putting themselves in a situation where they may be at risk of harm, then that should be the officer's priority' (2) Officers are also advised to give consideration to the safety and welfare of any child stopped and to follow their force's safeguarding policies.

DO THE POLICE HAVE TO NOTIFY ME WHEN THEY STOP AND SEARCH MY CHILD?

No - A child can be stopped and searched, or subject to a 'more thorough search' like the ones described above (see 'What is stop and search?'), without the presence of a parent or other adult. They should be given a record or receipt confirming the details of the stop and search, but the police are not required to inform parents or carers that a search of their child has taken place.

WHAT ABOUT STRIP SEARCH?

If a search of a child under 18 years old involves exposure of intimate parts of the body (often called a 'strip search') the police should - except in cases of exceptional urgency - call an 'appropriate adult' to be present during the search. These searches will take place at a nearby police station or other nearby location which is out of public view (but not a police vehicle).

'AN APPROPRIATE ADULT' IS DEFINED AS:

- A parent or guardian.
- If the child is in the care of a local authority or voluntary organisation, a person representing that authority or organisation.
- A social worker of a local authority.
- Failing these, some other responsible adult aged 18 or over who is not a police officer or employed by the police.

A PERSON IS NOT AN APPROPRIATE ADULT IF THEY:

- Are a suspect / victim / witness involved in the same investigation; or
- Have heard the child admit the offence; or
- Are estranged from the child, who objects to their presence.



If a child admits an offence to, or in the presence of, a social worker other than during the time that person is acting as the juvenile's appropriate adult, another appropriate adult should be appointed in the interest of fairness.

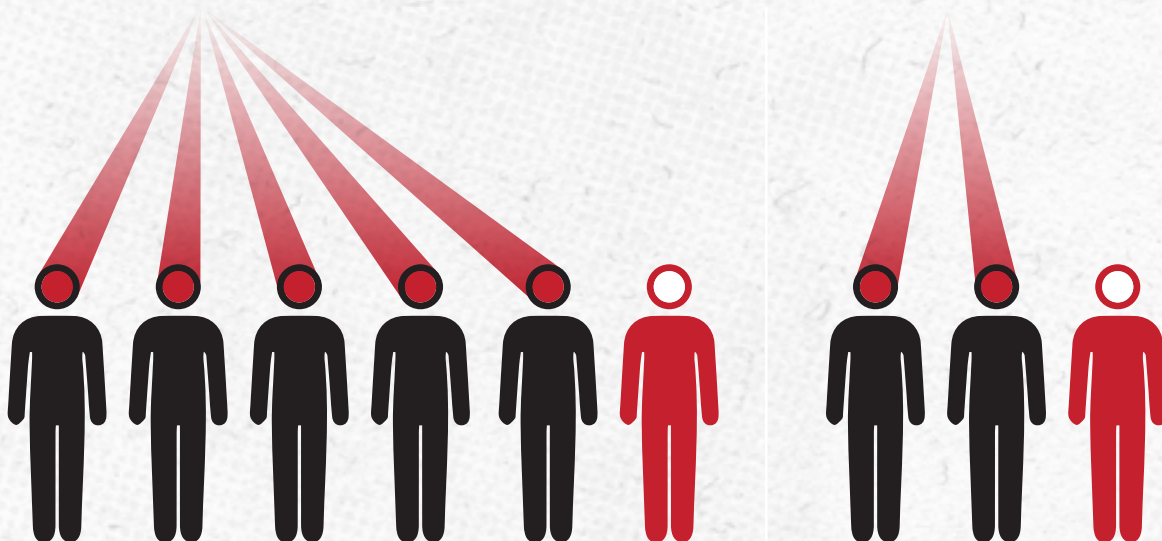
THE 'STRIP SEARCH' MUST TAKE PLACE WITH THE 'APPROPRIATE ADULT' BEING PRESENT, UNLESS BOTH THE CHILD AND 'APPROPRIATE ADULT' AGREE TO THE 'APPROPRIATE ADULT' LEAVING THE ROOM. A record of this decision must be signed by the 'appropriate adult'.

DOES A STOP AND SEARCH MEAN MY CHILD IS IN TROUBLE?

If your child is subject to a stop and search this does not mean they are in trouble, or have done anything wrong. **MOST SEARCHES DO NOT RESULT IN ANY FURTHER ACTION BEING TAKEN.** Even when officers follow the correct rules and apply the right legal tests, your child may be searched because they happen to meet the description of someone else. Some legal powers allow officers to conduct random searches on any passers-by and they may not have any particular reason to suspect your child.

It is also important to recognise that stop-searches may be undertaken unlawfully, and that some individuals or groups may be targeted unfairly as a result of prejudice and discrimination (3).

Police data for England and Wales routinely show that black people are stopped and searched by police at more than five times the rate of white people, while Asian people are stopped and searched at twice the rate of whites (4). This disproportionate focus on people from black and minority ethnic groups cannot be explained by offending rates: drug possession (mostly of cannabis), for example, is a key driver of stop and search, yet white people use drugs at a higher rate than people from black and minority ethnic groups (5).



WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF A STOP AND SEARCH ON CHILDREN?

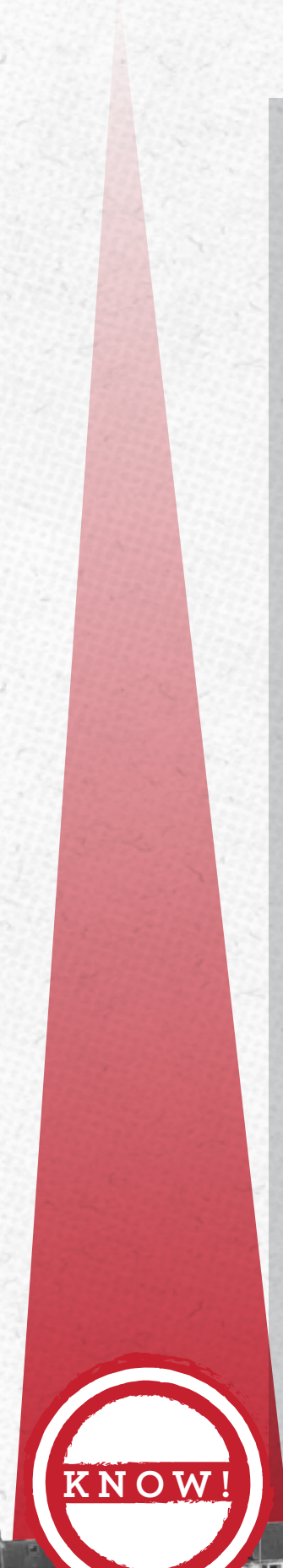
“ Joseph has been stopped and searched on a very regular basis. He says that it’s part of life and that it happens all the time. He always says they’re disrespectful and quite aggressive. And because they’re aggressive, he’s aggressive back. As a young boy Joseph was very bright, very bubbly, very inquisitive, always eager to learn and a really, really affectionate child. Joseph now is withdrawn, temperamental. He’s still very affectionate but, I think he’s finding life hard at the moment. I do put it down to him being stopped and searched all the time. I try to encourage him to go out but he doesn’t want to go because he knows what’s going to happen when he’s out there. Recently, he passed his driving theory test, and came home really excited. He went out on his bike to tell his friends. He came back in a few minutes later as he got stopped and searched at the top of the road. So it’s like harassment. I don’t like to use the word hate but I feel sometimes I do despise the police for what’s happened to my son. Joseph feels the odds are now stacked against him. He always says people see black first before they see anything else”.

- Mother



Stop and search can be a frightening and embarrassing experience for children. The physical contact can be confusing; one young person described it as **“AN ADULT STRANGER TOUCHING ME IN PUBLIC”**.

Stop-searches usually take place in public places and are often highly visible. Young people who are stopped are often acutely aware of being observed by passers-by. Observers easily assume that those stopped have done something wrong, while those who have been stopped worry that family, teachers and friends may see or hear about the stop and assume they are at fault.



Stop and search can have practical implications for children, such as when a child is stopped on the way to school. One parent we spoke to was concerned about letting her daughter go to school alone for fear that the police might target her. A teacher told us that children who are stopped and searched on the way into school can be difficult to engage in class, especially if they feel embarrassed, hurt, or angry, or the interaction has made them late to school. **CHILDREN REPORTED CHANGING THEIR BEHAVIOUR IN ORDER TO AVOID ANY INTERACTION WITH THE POLICE, SUCH AS CHANGING THE ROUTE THEY WALKED TO SCHOOL.**

Even witnessing a stop and search on another person such as a friend, sibling, or parent can have an impact on a child. Some young people described feeling scared and intimidated when approached by police officers who are often in pairs or groups.

Children may feel they are targeted and ‘hassled’ by police because of their age, race or because they dress in a certain style, e.g. wearing hoodies, tracksuits and sportswear. Many of the children involved in our consultations believed the police had a negative attitude towards them, and described interactions where officers were rude, judgemental, demeaning, heavy-handed or ‘over the top’.




KNOW!

Research shows that public confidence in the police is undermined by unsatisfactory contact with officers, and that levels of support and trust in the police are lower among people who have recently been stop and searched (6). Studies are also starting to identify the detrimental impact that negative contact with police can have on psychological well-being. When people feel they have been treated unfairly by police this seems to undermine their sense of belonging to society (7).

IN THE UNITED STATES, MORE INTRUSIVE AND/OR REPETITIVE STOP AND SEARCH HAS BEEN LINKED WITH HIGHER LEVELS OF TRAUMA AND ANXIETY AMONG YOUNG URBAN MEN (8).


When trust and confidence are undermined in this way people tend to be less likely to call on the police to resolve tensions and disagreements and are more likely to resort to self-help violence (9). The House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee investigation into Young Black People and the Criminal Justice System (2007) recognised this process. Based on hearings with the police, community members, organisations and faith groups, it concluded that “a lack of trust in the police was leading young people to turn to informal ‘street justice’, in which friends, relatives or the victims themselves took action to seek redress” (10).





“ There is a kind of feeling of us against them. I mean, if you’re an 8-year-old child and you go to play football, and the police officer stops and searches you. If you experience that from the age of 8, all the way through your secondary school career, then you’re not going to have a positive view of the police. You will not invest faith in the police if something happens to you. You start to feel you have to take the law into your own hands. Being stopped three times in the same day, that’s bound to mess up your psyche. You’re criminalizing people who are already in an environment where it is extremely easy to slip into crime anyway. You don’t want to give them a motive to engage in crime. For my entire childhood I would never have turned to the police for any assistance. If someone tried to rob me, my mind frame would be to phone members of my community to help me go and get back my stuff”.

- Kwabena Oduro-Ayim





HOW DO I SPEAK TO MY CHILD ABOUT STOP AND SEARCH?

“The conversation,” where parents try to prepare their children for such encounters with the police, is unfortunately a common feature of black family life.

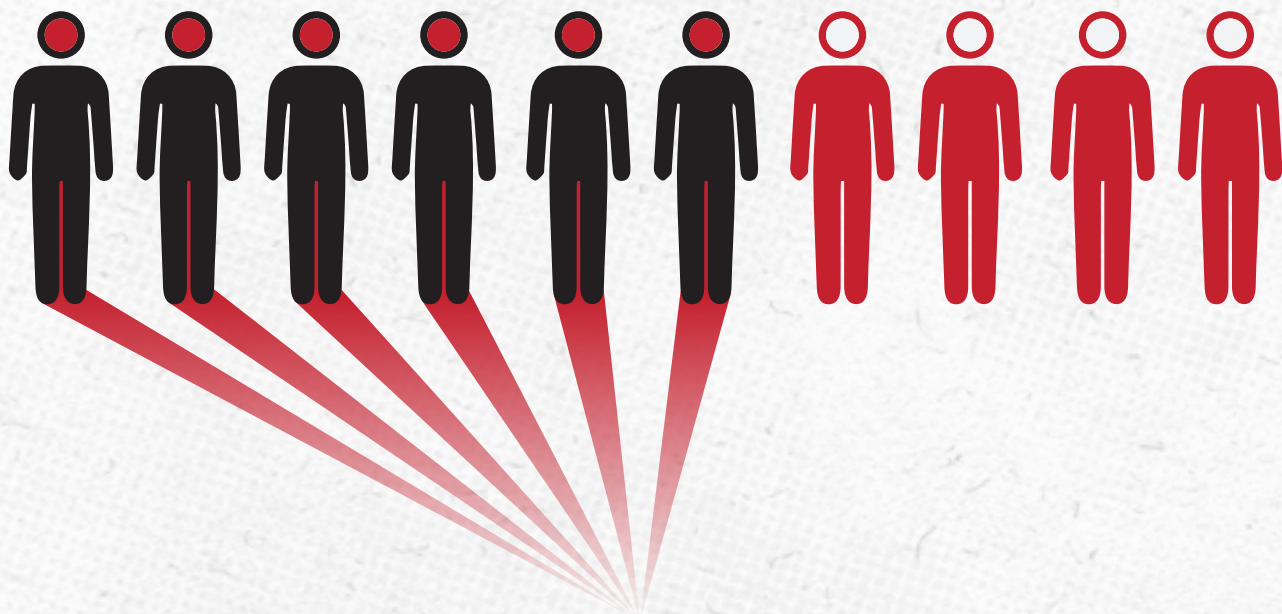
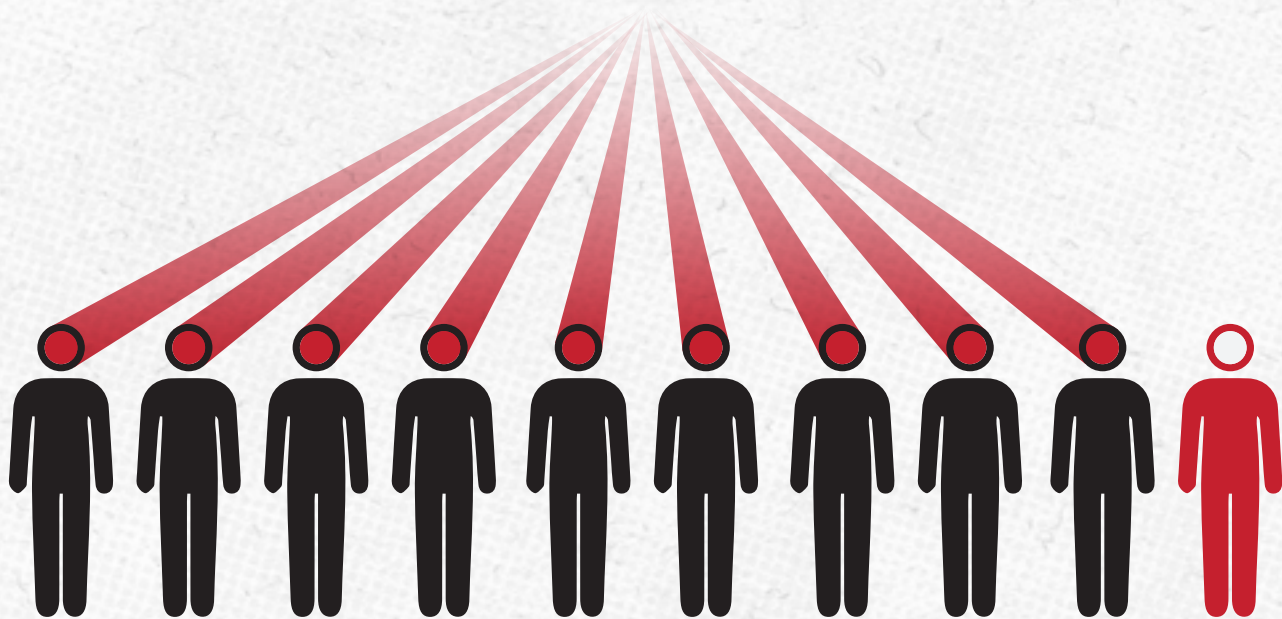
“ If I had a choice, I wouldn't want to be having that conversation with him at all, because at 14, that's not something that a 14 year old boy should ever need to discuss. That's what saddens me. You want your children to have good experiences when they're young. It is hard to explain to him. I just want him to understand that unfortunately, at this moment in time, with the way society is, this is the way people are treated.”

- Paul Mortimer

“ you wouldn't send your children out without teaching them the green cross code to be able to cross roads, would you? As parents, we need to prepare our children for interactions with the police or the consequence can be as serious as getting hit by a car!”

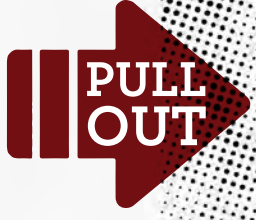
- Mother

Nine out of ten parents we surveyed thought it was important for their children to know how to conduct themselves during an interaction with police...



...but only six out of ten had ever spoken to their child about stop and search (11).

Your child may be reluctant to talk to you about stop and search for a number of reasons. Some of those we spoke to said they worried that their parents would be suspicious they had done something wrong, while others were concerned their parents would be overprotective and become angry with the police.



WHAT IS STOP & SEARCH?

SPRING 2017

STOP AND SEARCH POWERS

Police officers in England and Wales do not have the legal right to stop and search anybody they want, whenever they want. They do have specific legal powers that allow them to stop and search a person under certain conditions. The rules and regulations covering the use of these powers are laid out in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984 (PACE) Code of Practice A (available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/pace-code-a-2015).



REASONABLE GROUNDS

Most, but not all, stop and search powers require reasonable grounds for suspicion – this is the legal test that an officer must satisfy before they can detain somebody and carry out a search. The officer must have formed a genuine suspicion that they will find the object that the power they are using allows them to search for; and there must be an objective basis for this suspicion, which means it must be based on facts, information and/or intelligence.

The law says that reasonable suspicion can never be supported on the basis of personal factors. Unless police have a description of the suspect, they cannot use a person's physical appearance (age, gender, race or religion etc) as the reason for stopping and searching them. Nor can the decision to stop and search be based on generalisations or stereotypes that certain groups or categories of people are more likely to be involved in crime.



THE MOST WIDELY USED POWERS

Most stop-searches are carried out under one of two Acts – The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Section 1); and The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Section 23).

All these powers require that the officer conducting the search must have objective reasons for suspecting that the individual they are searching is in possession of prohibited articles - stolen articles, weapons, drugs, firearms or ammunition. Good reasons include specific intelligence, evidence, or an allegation that identifies the person being searched. Reasons that are too general include being in a “high crime area”, “behaving suspiciously” or “smelling of cannabis.”



“EXCEPTIONAL” POWERS

Some stop and search powers can be used without reasonable grounds for suspecting particular individuals:

Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (“Section 60”) was designed to provide an exceptional response where serious violence is anticipated. It allows officers to stop and search anybody in an area where the use of the power has been authorised. Authorisation lasts 24 hours and can be extended for a further 24 hours. Current best practice requires police forces to limit authorisations to 15 hours with a 9 hour extension. Forces are required to communicate where section 60 authorisations are in place and, where practical, inform the public of the purpose and outcome.

Section 47a Terrorism Act 2000 allows officers to stop and search anybody in a defined area without reasonable suspicion if an act of terrorism is reasonably suspected, and stop and search is deemed necessary to prevent such an act. Officers can only use this power where and when its use has been authorised by a senior officer.

Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000 provides officers with stop, search and detention powers in ports and airports. Individuals stopped under this power are not under arrest, but may be detained for up to 6 hours wherein they may be questioned, searched (as well as their belongings), and have samples of their DNA & fingerprints taken from them.



STOP AND ACCOUNT

Not every stop results in a search. Police officers sometimes stop people on the street and ask them to account for their actions, behaviour or presence in an area, without going on to search them. Officers do not have a legal power to force people to stay with them and answer these questions and people are under no legal obligation to do so (although note that the position is different when you are driving a vehicle or riding a bicycle – see below on ‘Section 163 Road Traffic Act 1988’). At the same time, officers are not required to inform the person stopped that they do not have to answer their questions and are free to leave. Refusing to answer such questions may be considered suspicious by the officer, who may go on to conduct a search (using their legal powers). There is no national requirement that people who are stopped and asked to account for themselves are given a record of the stop (although some forces do provide one).



SECTION 163 ROAD TRAFFIC ACT 1988

This power allows police to stop a person driving a motor vehicle (or riding a bicycle) on public land and ask them to produce a driving licence, certificate of insurance and MOT certificate. Officers may also ask passengers questions. Failure to stop constitutes a criminal offence. This is effectively a ‘stop and account’ power. The officer does not need ‘reasonable grounds’ and does not have to give a reason. There is no national requirement to monitor or record Section 163 stops and those stopped are not entitled to a record of the stop.



SECTION 38 OF THE POLICE REFORM ACT 2002 (PRA)

This power allows police community support officers (PCSOs) to seize alcohol from a person under 18 and tobacco from a person under 16 smoking in a public place. If the PCSO reasonably believes the person is in possession of these items they can ask for their consent to search for them. It is an offence to withhold consent without a reasonable excuse and if a person declines then the PCSO can demand a name and address. Failure to provide this information gives the PCSO the power to detain a person for 30 minutes, until a police officer arrives who will then decide whether to search or arrest them. In some police forces, PCSOs can conduct the search themselves without waiting for an officer to arrive.





The parents we consulted made the following suggestions to help start “the conversation” with your child:

- > **TALK ABOUT YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES WITH POLICE.**
- > **USE SEEING POLICE ON THE STREET OR A POLICE SCHOOL VISIT TO START A WIDER CONVERSATION ABOUT POLICING AND STOP AND SEARCH.**
- > **DRAW CONNECTIONS WITH NEWS, CURRENT AFFAIRS, OR COMMUNITY ISSUES WHEN STOP AND SEARCH OR RELATED ISSUES ARE DISCUSSED OR VISIBLE.**
- > **GIVE YOUR CHILD AN OPPORTUNITY TO BRING THE ISSUE UP THEMSELVES (YOU MAY WANT TO LEAVE OUT MATERIALS SUCH AS NEWS ARTICLES AS A CONVERSATION STARTER; WWW.STOP-WATCH.ORG HAS A RANGE OF FREE AND INFORMATIVE MATERIAL FOR THE PUBLIC, INCLUDING FACTSHEETS AND FILMS).**
- > **VISIT THE WWW.STOP-WATCH.ORG ‘YOUR AREA’ SECTION TOGETHER TO SEE STATISTICS AND DATA ON STOP AND SEARCH IN YOUR LOCAL AREA.**

Parents also suggested several ways of approaching a conversation with your child about a stop and search that has already happened:

- > **ACCEPT THAT YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT ALL YOUR CHILD’S EXPERIENCES WITH THE POLICE AND DON’T BE SURPRISED IF THEY AREN’T FORTHCOMING IN THE CONVERSATION.**
- > **YOU MAY WANT TO EXPLAIN TO THEM THAT WHAT HAPPENED WAS NOT THEIR FAULT, DOES NOT SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THEM AND DOES NOT MEAN THEY ARE ENGAGED IN CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR. IT MIGHT ALSO HELP TO SAY THAT THIS SORT OF THING HAPPENS TO LOTS OF OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE.**
- > **ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR FEELINGS AND RECOGNISE THAT IT’S NORMAL TO FEEL FRUSTRATED AND OVERWHELMED UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES.**
- > **ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO TALK ABOUT THE SPECIFIC FEELINGS THAT COME UP FOR THEM IF THEY HAVE BEEN SINGLED OUT BECAUSE OF THEIR RACE OR ETHNICITY, BECAUSE THEY ARE A YOUNG PERSON, OR IF THEY FEEL THEY HAVE BEEN STEREOTYPED IN ANY OTHER WAY.**

Talk with your child about what is acceptable behaviour and language from the police officer and what is not.

Talking things through with your child can help to ensure they know what to expect from a stop and search and are able to identify any unreasonable behaviour they may experience during the process. This should mean they feel less isolated and more able to deal with a police encounter, and are more likely to speak to you again about any future interactions with the police



HOW ELSE CAN I PREPARE MY CHILD FOR STOP AND SEARCH?

Some of the parents we spoke to worked with their children to develop a strategy for how to deal with stop and search encounters. Stop and search can happen unexpectedly - children and young people will feel better equipped to handle the encounter if they know what to expect and how to manage their behaviour. This may also help reduce the impact and any harm caused.

As part of the Y-STOP project, young people identified six principles that can be used to navigate stop and search encounters:



STAY CALM

EYE CONTACT

ASK QUESTIONS

RECEIPT & RECORD

CONFIDENCE

HOLD TO ACCOUNT

- **STAY CALM:** Staying calm helps you to influence the outcome of the encounter and end it faster than if you get angry and aggressive. If you start to feel angry, try and calm yourself down by taking deep breaths.
- **EYE CONTACT:** Making eye contact with the police officer can make you feel more equal to them and more engaged in the conversation. Try not to let anger or fear get the better of you and try to remain polite even if the officer is not.
- **ASK QUESTIONS:** Treating the encounter as a conversation and not a confrontation can help. When a police officer asks you a question, answer them and feel free to ask some questions back.

The following questions should help you. They are called the '4 W's':

- > **Why are you stopping me (reasons and legal power used*)?**
- > **What are you looking for?**
- > **Who are you (name and ID number)?**
- > **Where are you from (police station)?**

*The pullout included in this guide summarises the most common powers used to stop and search.

- **RECORD OR RECEIPT:** The record or receipt is your official proof of the search and the officer should give you one, or tell you how and where you can get a copy later. Recording the encounter yourself on a smart phone can provide a record of what has happened and may help to ensure that officers behave professionally. However, it also has the potential to escalate encounters if police officers do not want to be filmed, so you should judge whether it is appropriate to make a video or audio recording. If you do make a record, you should inform the police officer that you are going to get your phone out and film the search (Note: reaching into your pocket without warning might be misinterpreted by the police as a threat).
- **CONFIDENCE:** Be prepared to be stopped and searched. Understanding the rights young people are supposed to have can help you act more confidently during your encounter with the police.
- **HOLD TO ACCOUNT:** When police do not behave properly you can take further action such as making an official complaint.

Y-STOP has created a downloadable app to make it easier to complain about stop and search. The app allows people to:

- > **Report stop and search experiences or ones they witness**
- > **Record video/audio of police interactions and send it to Y-STOP**
- > **Connect with lawyers and experts for support**
- > **Make a complaint directly to police**
- > **Know what their rights are to keep them safe**

For advice and guidance about how to make a complaint visit:
<http://lcapsv.net/need-legal-advice/>.





HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY CHILD AFTER A STOP AND SEARCH?

The following strategies for empowerment can help a child to build resilience and heal from negative interactions with the police (12):

MAKE CONNECTIONS: It is easy to take negative interactions with authority figures personally, and for children these feelings can be particularly difficult to overcome or put into context. Try and find ways to let your child know they are not alone; there are other people who experience negative interactions with the police who they might be able to speak to. If you have never experienced a negative interaction with the police, you might know someone who has. Making it clear that such interactions are a shared experience rather than isolated incidents can be really helpful for children – whose emotional and psychological wellbeing are still in development.

Tip: Connect with others and build resilience in your child through engaging with local social support networks.



HELP OTHERS: Often when we feel helpless about a situation it can be empowering to work with others to find solutions. Once children develop the skills needed for them to feel more confident in dealing with police interactions, these skills can be shared with other children. Older children could be encouraged to use their skills to help prepare and empower younger children. Y-STOP offers peer-training workshops, which are delivered to children and young people aged 16 and above.

Tip: Encourage your child to help build resilience in their communities and amongst their friendship groups.

TAKE A BREAK: While it is important for your child to be able to talk about their interactions with the police and develop resilience, too much focus on this can be counter-productive. The amount of information we are bombarded with can be quite overwhelming at times and it can be really important for your child to focus on something besides what's worrying them.

Tip: Be aware of what your child is exposed to that can be troubling - whether it be their direct interactions with police, stories in the news and on the internet, or overheard conversations - knowing your child's activities can make it easier for you to make sure your child takes a break from the more stressful things, while also exploring ways to understand them and help them to focus on the positive things happening in their life.



SET GOALS: Building strength and resilience as individuals and as communities is a long term effort. Many parents pass on knowledge and skills they have learned in navigating police interactions. Although your child may be too young to consider a long-term view on their own, you can help them see that there is a future beyond the current situation they are facing and that their future can be less daunting.

Tip: Talk to your child about what, in their view, a safe and accountable community looks like. Help your child to set reasonable goals towards growing in confidence when dealing with the police. Do this one step at a time. Go at a pace comfortable for your child. Moving toward their goals — even if it's a tiny step — and receiving praise for doing so will focus your child on what they have accomplished rather than on what hasn't been accomplished, and can help build the confidence and resilience needed to move forward as they navigate challenges.

CAN I TAKE ANY FURTHER ACTION AFTER MY CHILD HAS BEEN STOPPED AND SEARCHED?

The law on stop and search is complex and hard to navigate. Rules and guidelines are often developed, updated, and amended by the Home Office, the College of Policing, and local police forces. However by following this simple checklist with your child, you may be able to establish whether the officer has completed a search properly and whether you have a case for further action:

- 1. Did the officer explain why they were carrying out the stop and search?**
- 2. Did the officer explain which law or power they were using to conduct the stop and search?**
- 3. Did the officer say what they were looking for?**
- 4. Did the officer identify themselves?**
- 5. Did the officer provide a record or receipt for the search? ***
- 6. Was the officer professional and respectful during the encounter?**
- 7. Were you happy with the way the officer spoke to and treated you?**



*The record should provide all of the information listed here and proves that the stop took place. This is especially important if you want to raise any concerns later on or make a complaint. If your child does not have a copy of the record you can get one from a police station for up to 3 months after the search.

Failure to follow any of the steps listed above can be a sign that the search was not carried out properly.

“ My young person was surprised at the result and now feels vindicated. But I honestly know if he had put through the original complaint himself, he would not have got this far, he would've given up as there were obstacles every step of the way and I had to be careful to record all contact with the police (which the IPCC found really useful.) I would always recommend making a complaint but for people to be mindful of just how arduous and off-putting it is and I would recommend people are persistent and record and log everything, I would definitely recommended doing it for a young person on their behalf, if you are aware of one that has had a negative stop & search experience. I feel we, as parents, carers and youth work professionals should be advocating for our young people while the process is so difficult for them to navigate, as their experiences and voices need to be heard and Stop & Search practice needs to be monitored and challenged where it is unacceptable. ”

- Senior youth services manager for a local authority.



IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT A STOP AND SEARCH THERE ARE SEVERAL DIFFERENT ACTIONS YOU OR YOUR CHILD CAN TAKE:



ACTION	ADVANTAGES	CHALLENGES
<p><u>Anonymous feedback:</u></p> <p>Many police forces or Police and Crime Commissioner Offices give the option of leaving anonymous feedback by filling in a feedback form on their website. There are also separate 'rate your local police' websites for some forces, including Dyfed Powys, Gwent and Leicestershire. You can give feedback directly to us at StopWatch through the Y-STOP app. We can then support you in assessing whether you have grounds to take the complaint further</p>	<p>This is a way to register dissatisfaction and give feedback without having to identify yourself or your child and without having to take further action.</p>	<p>Providing feedback in this way relies on the police or oversight authority taking action on the comments. It can be difficult to hold individual officers and forces to account with anonymous feedback without further details. As this is not a formal complaint, further action is necessary to enact justice when it is due.</p>
<p><u>Making a formal complaint:</u></p> <p>You have a right to complain about the conduct of a police officer where you believe their behaviour falls below the required standard. This may include situations where you think excessive force was used, where discriminatory language was used or, perhaps, where you believe your child was stopped or searched without good reason.</p> <p>You can download our complaints guide from: www.stop-watch.org/uploads/documents/complaintsguide.pdf</p>	<p>Making a formal complaint begins the process of holding the officer(s) in question formally accountable. Having a record of the types of complaints being made to an individual force means that there is evidence of the ways in which forces need to improve. Complaints records can also be used to provide more evidence that negative interactions with the police are not isolated experiences.</p>	<p>Stop and search complaints are difficult to substantiate as they often rely on competing accounts provided by the police officer and person stopped with no witnesses. The complaints system can be difficult to navigate. You may feel as though you are fighting an uphill battle before you even begin. Many complainants note that the process takes a long time, which can be demoralising, especially if the nature of the interaction was particularly traumatic or negative.</p>





Write to your MP

Your MP can raise questions with local authorities (as well as in Parliament). You may write a personalised account of your child's experience, or you can simply raise a general concern about the use of stop and search in your area. You may also speak directly to your MP during their local surgery hours. You can write to your MP using the website www.writetothem.com, which has helpful instructions about how to write your letter as well as other useful guidelines.



Getting your MP involved may mean your complaints are taken more seriously and you get a response more quickly. This also supports wider change beyond your individual experience as it shines a light on the police force as a whole.



Your MP has no obligation to respond directly to you, even if they take your complaint into account. It can take time and effort to write to or meet your MP, especially if you have never done this before.

Get in touch with your local stop and search monitoring group.

Community monitoring groups provide local oversight of policing. The structure and function of groups differ widely across the country but most are made up of members of the public, and their role is to monitor all stop and search issues for their area, including complaints, use of stop and search, ethnic disproportionality and outcomes. Your local force's website should have contact information for these, or you can contact StopWatch for support in locating your local group or visit the <http://www.stop-watch.org/your-area/> section of our website.

If you are unhappy with an encounter, your local monitoring group will be able to scrutinise the incident and raise concerns about it directly with local police. You can also write joint letters to your MP with your monitoring group, lessening the burden on you or your child to navigate the complaints system alone.

Each monitoring group works differently. Some are more effective and responsive than others. Contact your local monitoring group to get more information about the type of support they can provide and whether it matches your needs.

FURTHER RESOURCES

1. StopWatch has produced a number of films that look at stop and search:

[Viewed with Suspicion](#) – a film which explores what it feels like to be stopped and searched

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Tx7sK54y2Y&t=9s>

[Profiles of the Profiled](#) – a film made by young people on stop and search https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvtZo2f_XeQ

2. Y-Stop, StopWatch's youth stop and search project, has created a mobile app, film, and workshops for young people.

3. StopWatch has a comprehensive guide to making a police complaint that walks you through each step, and explains how to strengthen your case and tackle challenges you may come up against. We also run free surgeries on the last Thursday of every month to offer help with specific complaints.

4. We can also organise workshops for groups of parents who want to learn more about stop and search powers, or provide help with some individual complaints.

You can also have a look at the [Community Resources](#) page on our website, where we keep an updated list of further resources for your access. If you have any helpful resources you'd like to share.

5. Visit <http://www.stop-watch.org/> for more information or email info@stop-watch.org

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- 11** StopWatch administered a web-based survey targeting parents whose children may have been at risk of stop and search. The survey was completed by forty-four parents. Twenty two of the respondents were male, 20 were female; 11 identified as African Caribbean, 13 as Black African, two as Asian, 14 as White/European; and two preferred not to say.
- 12** Adapted from American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/resilience.aspx>



ABOUT STOPWATCH

STOPWATCH IS A COALITION, WHICH WORKS TO:

- > Promote effective, accountable and fair policing
- > Inform the public about the use of stop and search
- > Develop and share research on stop and search and alternatives
- > Organise awareness raising events and forums
- > Provide legal support challenging stop and search

Since forming in 2010, StopWatch has led a wide-ranging campaign against the disproportionate use of stop and search, the increasing use of exceptional stop and search powers and the weakening of accountability mechanisms. This includes legal and policy analysis, media coverage and commentary, political advocacy, litigation, submissions to national and international organisations and community organising. The unique mix of academics, activists, young people and lawyers has proved effective at challenging the current use of the tactic and drawing attention to the realities for those on the receiving end of police powers.

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This guide is for parents, carers and anyone who regularly interacts with or cares for children and young people. It has been made in consultation with parents' groups, children and young people who have been stopped and searched.



The guide contains information and tips to help support children before any police interaction occurs, immediately after a stop and search, and over time if they are stopped repeatedly or have a particularly negative interaction with the police.

