

Definition of Fair and Effective Stop Search

Introduction

The primary purpose of stop and search powers is to enable officers to allay or confirm suspicions about individuals carrying unlawful items, without exercising their power of arrest, where the officer has reasonable grounds for carrying out a search. The primary role of the police is to uphold the law and maintain the Queen's peace. Unfair, unlawful or unnecessary stop searches make this task harder with one of the direct consequences being a reduction in public trust and police legitimacy, and people being more likely to break the law and less willing to cooperate with the police.

Definition of a fair and effective stop and search encounter

This definition has been subject to broad consultation with police officers and staff, members of the public, stakeholders, campaign and monitoring groups.

A stop and search is most likely to be fair and effective when:

- **the search was a justified and lawful use of the power that stands up to public scrutiny;**
- **the officer genuinely believes the person has an item in their possession;**
- **the member of the public understands why they have been searched and feels that they have been treated with respect;**
- **the search was necessary and was the least intrusive method a police officer could use to establish whether a member of the public has a prohibited article or an item for use in crime with them and**
- **more often than not the item is found.**

All stops and searches must be carried out in line with the rules set out in Code A of the Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and in accordance with the principles provided by the Police Code of Ethics: accountability, fairness, honesty, integrity, leadership, objectivity, openness, respect and selflessness.