

CORONAVIRUS & THE POLICE

A guide for under 18s



The role of the police during the coronavirus outbreak.

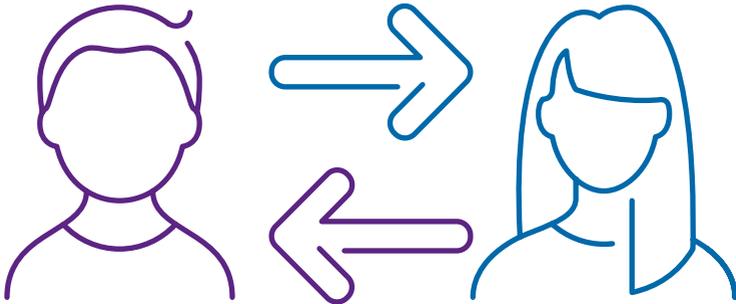
The Police enforce the government's rules around coronavirus.

Like any other law, these rules are important to make sure everybody stays safe.

If you, or someone you live with, develops a symptom of the virus then you must stay at home.

The best way to stay safe is to keep your distance from other people. This is called social distancing. You should stay a safe distance from anyone you don't live with.

We know that this can be a very worrying time so this information has been written in collaboration with young people to help reassure and guide you.



Stay a safe distance away from other people



If you, or someone you live with, develops a symptom of the virus then you must stay at home.

What are my rights?

The guidance on what you can and can't do can change depending on where you live and how much danger the virus poses.

You can find the latest guidance and rules here: [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) (England) and here: [gov.wales/coronavirus](https://www.gov.wales/coronavirus) (Wales)

- If you are out in public the police may ask questions to make sure you're keeping safe.
- If they think what you are doing is not safe, like meeting in very large groups, they will ask you to go home.
- If you refuse, they may take you home. The police want to keep everyone as safe as possible. If the police have to take you somewhere in a car they may wear gloves or a mask and may ask you to wear them also.
- In some cases your parents/carers may receive a fine
- If it is not safe for you to go home please tell the police and they can connect you to someone who can help.
- It is important to remember that all normal laws still apply and it is the police's job to continue to enforce these. Any law broken may result in prosecution.

Therefore, anything you may have been stopped for before the pandemic you may still be stopped for now.

If you break any law the police will deal with you in the same way as before the coronavirus.

This could result in you being stopped, searched and/or arrested.

The police are still allowed to do this even though it breaks social distancing.

The rest of this leaflet will explain what happens if you are in contact with the police during the coronavirus outbreak and how you will be kept safe.

What happens if I am stopped by the police?

The police have the right to stop and question you if they think that you are not following the social distancing rules or breaking any other law.

- The police will do this from a **safe distance** in order to protect you.
- The police may also **stop and question** you if they have concerns that you may be in the process of, or are about to commit an offence such as being in possession of drugs, weapons or stolen items.
- If this is the case then they **still have the right to search you**.
- **Police will wear gloves** and masks when they search you to keep you safe as they cannot search you from a distance.

What happens if I am arrested?

If you are arrested, the police will do everything they can to keep you safe from the virus.

- They will ask if you have any symptoms.
- They may also wear a mask/gloves and may give some to you to wear. This is to keep you both safe as being arrested will mean you cannot socially distance.
- Police stations will be regularly cleaned.
- There will be access to wash your hands or use sanitiser at police stations.



If you are arrested you may be asked to wear a mask/gloves.

This is to keep you both safe as being arrested will mean you cannot socially distance



What are my rights in custody?

Your rights have not changed. Your rights remain the same.

- You still have a legal right to an **appropriate adult** (parent, guardian or social worker).
- You still have a legal right to a **solicitor** for legal advice.
- If you have mental health issues, you should also be able to speak to someone from a local NHS service called **LADS**.
- If you are **unwell**, please tell someone and you will get medical attention.

These are your legal rights and we encourage you to ask for these.

To keep you and anyone that helps you safe, social distancing must be in place.

This means that legal support from a solicitor may be over the phone or in writing and may not be in person. This must still take place in private.

If your appropriate adult is not someone you live with then contact with them could be by telephone.

These changes are all legal because it is everyone's right to be kept safe from coronavirus. They are for your safety as well as the professionals helping you.

Anyone who sees you may wear gloves or a mask in order to protect you.



What happens next?

After you have been arrested the police look at whether you did or did not commit a crime. The easiest way to do this is to ask you questions, known as an interview.

Interviews are currently difficult to do because it is hard to socially distance when the rooms may be small and where it is important for other people to be present, like your solicitor and appropriate adult.

- This means that interviews may not always be completed.
- It will be up to the police officer to decide if an interview is needed.
- If an interview is needed, appropriate actions will be taken to keep everyone safe from the virus and the police will explain these to you.
- It may include wearing gloves and masks.
- It may mean sitting further apart, and it could also mean solicitors and appropriate adults attend via the telephone.

In some cases it may be deemed unsafe for everyone to conduct an interview. If this happens the police will explain this to you. This does not mean you won't receive fair treatment. Instead, in order to be fair, the interview will be postponed and you will be allowed to return to your home.

This is called **bail**. Sometimes there are restrictions you have to follow while you wait for your interview to be rescheduled. If so, these will be explained to you. The interview should take place within 6 months.

There might be times when the police decide that an interview is not required at all. If this happens the police will explain why and you will be allowed to ask questions and continue to get legal advice if needed.

What happens if I have had contact with the police and am not happy about how it went or how I was treated?

If you are unhappy with your experience with the police or feel you have not been treated fairly then you have the right to complain.

There are several ways in which you can do this;

1. You can **tell them directly** (verbal complaint)
2. You can make a **formal complaint** if you feel you haven't been listened to
3. You can **complain to the IOPC** – The Independent Office for Police Conduct who are employed specifically to investigate complaints against the police.

If you would like to complain then you should ask to speak to a senior member of police staff.

If you don't feel able to talk to them directly then you can ask someone to **complain on your behalf**, for example, a solicitor, relative or a teacher.

If you want to complain to the IOPC you can:

- visit their website and fill in a complaint form at **www.policeconduct.gov.uk**
- call them on **030 0020 0096**
- email them at **enquiries@policeconduct.gov.uk**
- contact them via **twitter @IOPC_Helppoliceconduct.gov.uk**

When the police force or the IOPC receive your complaint they may send you a reply to say they have received it. Then they will look into your complaint and handle it in a reasonable way. This may or may not involve an investigation. At the end, they will let you know the outcome of your complaint.

Further Information & Support

