

Y•STOP?

Aim:

For participants to feel confident to engage with the police, to know what to expect and feel able to handle a stop and search.

Outcomes:

- Describe and reflect on the main problems with how police and young people interact during a stop and search
 - Recall the 6 steps to handle a stop and search
 - Apply 6 steps in a stop and search situation
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Duration: 60 minutes

Starter (10 mins, group discussion)

Who has ever been stopped and searched, or knows someone who has?

Do you think certain people are more likely to be stopped and searched than others?

How do you think it feels to be stopped and searched / what impact does it have?

Points to consider

- *Learners may not be comfortable people in sharing personal experiences with the police, gauge how general to keep the discussion.*
 - *Nationally, black people are 6 times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people, Asians are twice as likely.*
 - *Young people are disproportionately stopped, we estimate about 25% are on those under 24 years old.*
 - *Address the impact of stop and search on an individual but also more widely; on relationship to the police, on their parents and families, on society.*
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The interaction (15, split into two groups – or four if necessary)

Ask each group to discuss if they think it is justified that people looking or acting a certain way are stopped more by police.

Give each group a large sheet of flipchart paper and ask one half to discuss and draw their perceptions of a police officer, and the other half to draw their perceptions of a young person being stopped. They can use labels etc. to add characteristics, quotes, behaviour etc. and can be positive, negative or neutral.

After 10 mins, bring the groups together to present the main points, identifying the key problems in the interaction.

S.E.A.R.C.H formula. (15, group discussion)

Rest of the session will now focus on **solutions**. Write the following six principles on a white board or flip chart:

S.tay calm
E.ye contact
A.sk questions
R.eciept/record
C.onfidence
H.old to account

Now go through each one of the principles in detail with the participants. Ask them why each is important and how it would be beneficial in the circumstance.

Points to remember

Stay calm

- *So you can think clearly, influence the outcome and end it faster than if you are aggressive or arrogant.*
- *If you start to feel angry, you can calm yourself down.*

Eye contact

- *This makes you feel equal to the officer, engaged in a conversation and not guilty.*
- *The more polite you are, it catches them off-guard and makes it harder for them to intimidate you.*
- *Try not to let anger or fear get the better of you.*

Ask questions

- *Treat it as a conversation not a confrontation, answer reasonable questions and ask some back.*
- *It is important to ask at the start if you are being detained or are free to leave.*
- *Ask the "4 W's":*
 - a) Why are you stopping me – on what grounds, what legal power are they using*
 - b) What are you looking for – the object of the search*
 - c) Who are you – the officer's ID number, see his badge or warrant if he is not in uniform*
 - d) Where are you from – the station where they are registered*
- *You do not have to give them any personal details if you do not want to.*

Receipt

- *This is your official proof, if you are not offered one always ask.*
- *For written slips check all sections have been completed and it is accurate, for electronic recording you will get a card with a reference number that you should use to claim your receipt.*

- *It is the law for the police to offer you a copy. If there is a good reason they cannot, they must tell you how to can obtain one later on.*
- *You can still claim it from the police station for the next 3 months. This is easier if you get the officer's ID. Even if you do not have any details but need them (to make a complaint for example) there will still be ways of doing this.*

Record

- *Filming protects everyone's interests as it is an additional layer of monitoring and protection for both the police and the person being searched. You are allowed to film as long as you do not obstruct the search (this is an offence), but sometimes officers do not like this so might challenge you.*
- *If you have a smart phone politely inform the officer that you are going to get it out to film the search (reaching for your pocket without warning might be misinterpreted as you pulling out e.g. a weapon).*
- *Sometimes you might not feel safe taking your phone out, this is understandable. Here are some tips and alternatives which are equally valuable; you could also ask a friend or passer-by to film it as a witness, or you could record the audio which does not require you to hold out your phone (you can even keep it in your pocket, which is definitely not obstructing).*
- *By downloading a live streaming video app, you will still have the footage even if their phone gets taken away or damaged.*

Confidence

- *There is a fine line between confidence and arrogance. You do not need to be threatening to display confidence.*
- *Knowing your rights and how to communicate clearly gives you more confidence.*

Hold to Account

- *The principle of accountability means that organisations or individuals are answerable i.e. they are obliged to explain and prove their actions fully and fairly. The police are public servants and as a society we have granted them special powers, which they must demonstrate are being used legally, effectively and fairly. This stands for both individual officers and the police as an institution.*
- *The public can, and should, hold the police to account by obtaining these explanations, checking records, assessing their fairness and accuracy, and challenging where these fall below the line of acceptability.*
- *For stop and search, this means collecting your receipt, recording what happened, and using this information to complain if necessary. Having all of this proof commits the officer to the explanation they have given you and therefore more likely to follow the law. Holding to account therefore improves police behaviour.*
- *There are also less formal ways of holding the police to account. Y-Stop has created an alternative and independent complaint system where you can report what happened, remaining anonymous if you wish. There is also the chance to share your stories and videos with each other, and sharing strategies to handle stop and search better.*

Applying the S.E.A.R.C.H formula (15, role play)

Ask for two volunteers to play police officers and give them the scenario (Resource A)

Ask for a volunteer to be searched and try to apply the formula.

Once played out, run through the six principles with the participants to check if the civilian used them all and discuss.

Repeat with a different volunteer/s. After demonstrating the formula's effectiveness and showing that it works even when under pressure from intimidating officers, remove S.E.A.R.C.H from the board to see if they can remember the 6 principles.

Points to consider

- *The role-play should end with our civilian successfully filming the police and not needing to give his name or address, without violence or escalation. The civilian should not be arrested and should receive a receipt.*
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Evaluation (5, group exercise)

Draw the table (Resource B) on the flipchart or whiteboard. Ask each participant to walk up to the board and write one statement in each column, correcting as you go.

Points to consider

- *This exercise should highlight to participants that they are not required to be passive in a police interaction; there are different options available to them and their decisions can influence the outcome.*

Appendix: Resources

Resource A

Think back to the typical police characters presented in the earlier activity. Play these roles to create a suspicious and stressful situation. But don't be too intimidating!

Police key points to mention:

You look suspicious.

You fit the description of a known drug dealer in the area and we can smell cannabis.

We believe you are concealing drugs and will have to search you.

Do not obstruct us by filming us.

What is your name, address and date of birth?

A slip will take at least 20 minutes to fill out, you don't want to wait around for that.

Resource B

If a police officer wants to stop and search me;

I CAN.....

I CAN'T....
