

Know Your Rights: Police Search Powers in a Designated Area



What is a Designated Area (DA)?

- Police and PSOs have expanded search powers: they can stop and search you, your bag, or your car, for weapons.
- They do not need a warrant or a reasonable suspicion but **must give you a search notice before they search you, your bag, or your car.**

If You Are Under 18

A police officer can carry out a **wand search** of a child. If they want to do an **outer search** or a **full/strip search**, it should be done in the presence of a parent, guardian or independent person. If that cannot be arranged, the search may still go ahead in the presence of another person who is not the officer doing the search, but only if specific conditions are met. This is allowed if the officer reasonably believes either that:

- the child is 15 years or older, or
- the child is under 15, and the search cannot be delayed due to the seriousness and urgency of the situation

Types of Searches

Wand Search:

Police can use a metal-detecting wand.

Outer Search:

Only after a wand search has been conducted and police believe you are concealing a weapon, they can ask you to empty your pockets or bags and can check your belongings. They can also ask you to remove outer clothing such as jackets, coats, hats or gloves. They can pat down the clothing underneath these outer layers.

Full / Strip Search:

After an outer search has been conducted and if police still reasonably believe you are concealing a weapon, they may conduct a full/strip search. Police can do a full search if a pat-down reveals you may be carrying a weapon, firearm, or something that could be used to cause harm or escape.

Your Rights Before and During a Search

Before

- Police must:
 - inform you of the reason for the search (e.g. you are in a designated area)
 - show ID if not in uniform
 - give you a search notice (this can be either hard copy or electronic).
- If you ask for it, police must tell you their name, rank, place of duty. They must also provide this information to you in writing if you ask for it.

During:

- All searches must be the least invasive option available.
- If a search involves touch or removing clothing, you can ask for it to be done by an officer of the same or your preferred gender. If this can't happen, they should explain why.

Note: It is a criminal offence to obstruct or hinder search powers, or to fail to comply with directions from Police or PSOs, without a reasonable excuse.

