



Home Office

**Draft Code of Practice  
issued under section  
292 of the Proceeds of  
Crime Act 2002  
Recovery of Cash: Search Powers**

March 2021



Home Office

# **Draft Code of Practice issued under section 292 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002**

## **Recovery of Cash: Search Powers**

Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 292(3) of the  
Proceeds of Crime Act 2002

March 2021



© Crown copyright 2021

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3) or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/publications](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications)

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at Criminal Finances Team, Home Office, 6th Floor Peel Building, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF

ISBN 978-1-5286-2485-5

CCS0321229286 03/21

Printed on paper containing 75% recycled fibre content minimum

Printed in the UK by the APS Group on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office

# Contents

Abbreviations used in this code	2
Introduction	2
General	5
Scope of the search powers	6
Limitations relating to searches of vehicles and persons	7
Limitation on exercise of powers by officers of Revenue and Customs	8
Limitation on exercise of powers by immigration officers	8
Limitations on exercise of powers by AFIs	9
Reasonable grounds for suspicion	9
Approval to search for cash	10
Seeking judicial approval	11
Seeking senior officer approval	12
Issues of approval	13
Refusal of prior approval	13
Prior approval impractical	13
Reports to the “appointed person”	14
Search of a person – section 289(3)	17
Steps prior to search of a person	17
Conduct of searches – persons	18
Recording requirements – searches of a person	21
Search of premises (including vehicles located on those premises) – section 289(1)	23
General	23
Steps prior to search of premises	24
Conduct of searches – premises	26
Leaving the premises	27
Recording requirements – search of premises	27
Search of Vehicles – section 289(1D)	29
General	29
Steps prior to search of a vehicle	30
Conduct of searches – vehicles	31
Recording requirements – search of vehicles	31

# Code of Practice issued under section 292 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 Recovery of Cash: Search Powers

**Officers must be aware of their mandatory obligations under the legislation and act in accordance with those duties. This is an absolute requirement regardless of any interpretation of this code or any other document or guidance.**

## **Abbreviations used in this code**

AFI	Accredited Financial Investigator
CEMA	Customs and Excise Management Act 1979
CFA	Criminal Finances Act 2017
DoJNI	Department of Justice in Northern Ireland
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs NCA
Agency	National Crime
SFO	Serious Fraud Office
PACE	Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
POCA	Proceeds of Crime Act 2002

This code has been re-issued to reflect some of the amendments to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) arising from the commencement of the Criminal Finances Act 2017 in Northern Ireland.

## **Introduction**

1. The purpose of this code is to guide officers in relation to the exercise of certain powers under Part 5 of POCA. The code should not be regarded as a complete or authoritative statement of the law. Only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the legislation, and the contents of this code may be affected by subsequent judicial decisions and changes to the legislative provisions referred to.

2. In this code:

- a reference to a statutory provision is to a provision of POCA unless otherwise stated.
- “cash” means notes and coins in any currency, postal orders, cheques of any kind (including travellers’ cheques), bankers’ drafts, bearer bonds, bearer shares, gaming vouchers, fixed-value casino tokens, and betting receipts found at any place in the United Kingdom<sup>1</sup>. The Secretary of State (and in relation to Northern Ireland, the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland (DoJNI)) can specify any other kind of monetary instrument as ‘cash’ by making an order.<sup>2</sup> Officers should ensure that they are aware of the current meaning when exercising powers. The power of search does not extend to any other property (for example, jewellery or pieces of art – see the separate code issued under section 303);
- “judicial officer” is, in relation to England and Wales, a justice of the peace; in relation to Northern Ireland, a lay magistrate;<sup>3</sup> and in relation to Scotland, a sheriff;
- “officer” includes an officer of Revenue and Customs, an immigration officer, a constable, an SFO officer (in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and an AFI unless otherwise specified.

3. This code of practice is made in connection with the exercise of the search powers conferred by section 289 on the following officers only, in the areas set out for each type of officer:

- officers of Revenue and Customs<sup>4</sup> in England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland;
- immigration officers<sup>5</sup> in England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland;
- constables in England and Wales;
- AFIs<sup>6</sup> in England and Wales; and
- SFO officers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

---

<sup>1</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 s. 289(6).

<sup>2</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.s.289(7).

<sup>3</sup> Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002, s 10.

<sup>4</sup> An officer of Revenue and Customs is a member of staff appointed by the Commissioners for Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs; Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act 2005, s.2.

<sup>5</sup> Section 24 of the UK Borders Act 2007 provides that Chapter 3 of Part 5 to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (recovery of cash in summary proceedings) applies to an immigration officer as it applies in relation to a constable.

<sup>6</sup> An AFI is an individual who is trained, accredited and monitored under s. 3 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 as a financial investigator. Accreditation may be limited to specified purposes as set out in an order made by the Secretary of State under s. 453 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

4. This code is made by the Secretary of State under section 292. Subject to paragraph 3, the code applies to all searches made under the powers in section 289 and to the application by officers for “prior approval” (from either a judicial officer or a senior officer) under section 290 in order to exercise the search powers. It applies to searches and applications made on or after 28 June 2021 and replaces previous codes made under section 292.
5. There is a separate code of practice relating to the exercise of the powers in section 289 by constables in Scotland. The relevant code is made by Scottish Ministers under section 293. There is a separate code of practice relating to constables and AFIs in Northern Ireland. The relevant code is made by DoJNI under section 293A.
6. The exercise of these powers by:
  - officers of Revenue and Customs and
  - by immigration officers are limited to exercise within the scope of their normal functions.

See paragraphs 23 to 25 for details

7. The code does not apply to searches carried out under any other provisions in POCA, or other legislation. If such searches result in cash being seized under section 294, the provisions of this code do not apply to that search retrospectively. However, if an officer is exercising an additional and separate function or power, for example, investigation powers under Part 8 of POCA, the officer should have regard to any code connected to the exercise of that function or power.
8. The code should be made available for reference by officers using the powers, and for members of the public. It should be available in particular at police premises and at ports where the powers are, or are likely, to be used. Government departments and other bodies who have AFIs operating these powers should also make arrangements for the code to be available, if practical, at their public offices.
9. Where an officer fails to comply with any provision of this code, they would not by reason only of that failure be liable to criminal or civil proceedings.
10. The code is admissible as evidence in criminal or civil proceedings and will be taken into account by a court or tribunal in any case in which it appears to the court or tribunal to be relevant.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, ss. 292(6) and (7)..

11. The power to search is also available in the UK Control Zone at Coquelles, where the officer seeking to use the powers has jurisdiction to operate in that area.<sup>8</sup>
12. If an officer is carrying out additional and separate functions or powers, the officer should have regard to any connected code in relation to the exercise of those functions or powers.
13. The expectation is that the provisions of this code will apply to the exercise of all functions under this code. However, any decision not to follow the code should be carefully considered and noted.

## **General**

14. The right to respect for private and family life and to the peaceful enjoyment of property under the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) are safeguarded by the Human Rights Act 1998. Powers of search may involve significant interference with the privacy of those whose premises and persons are searched and therefore need to be fully and clearly justified before they are used.
15. In particular, officers should consider at every stage whether the necessary objectives can be achieved by less intrusive means. In all cases officers should exercise their powers fairly, courteously, responsibly, respectfully and without unlawful discrimination and in accordance with any statutory duties placed on them. Under the Equality Act 2010, section 149, when police officers are carrying out their functions, they also have a duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a “relevant protected characteristic” (as defined in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) and people who do not share it, and to take steps to foster good relations between those persons. The Children Act 2004, section 11, also requires chief police officers, local authorities, health authorities, prisons, probation officers and other specified persons or bodies to ensure that in the discharge of their functions they have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of all persons under the age of 18.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> See the Channel Tunnel Act 1987, the Channel Tunnel (International Arrangements) Order 1993 (SI 1993/1813) and the Channel Tunnel (Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1994 (SI 1994/1405).

<sup>9</sup> Those exercising the powers in Northern Ireland should ensure that in the exercise of their functions, they have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of all persons under the age of 18 years in compliance with obligations under Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



16. If there is reason to believe that the use of the powers covered by this code might have an adverse effect on relations between law enforcement and the community, the local police/community liaison officer should be consulted:
  - before the action is taken, or
  - in particularly urgent cases, as soon as practical thereafter.
17. The officer should consider whether any consultation could jeopardise an ongoing wider operation or investigation. In such circumstances consultation may not be advisable, but generally it is best practice to consult.
18. The officer should take special care and have particular regard to an individual's vulnerabilities and possible difficulties when conducting a search. This is particularly relevant in the case of a search of a person who is a juvenile or persons with a mental or physical disability.
19. A refusal by a person to allow a search of a person, premises or a vehicle may, in some instances, constitute an offence (including but not limited to) wilful obstruction of an officer in the exercise of a power or execution of a duty.<sup>10</sup> This would be a criminal matter and is not an issue for, or subject to, this code. Officers should be aware of other legislation and codes applicable in these circumstances.

### **Scope of the search powers**

18. Section 289 provides powers for officers to search for cash (subject to the limitations below) where:
  - the officer is on any private premises and has lawful authority to be present (for example when a constable is exercising his powers of entry under PACE or when an officer of Revenue and Customs is exercising such powers under CEMA), and has reasonable grounds for suspecting that there is on the premises cash which satisfies the conditions in paragraph 19. The power to search premises includes the power to search a vehicle located on those premises<sup>11</sup> (see section 289(1D));
  - a vehicle is not on private premises on which an appropriate officer has lawful authority to be present

---

<sup>10</sup> See the Police Act 1996, s.89 (in relation to constables), of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, s.453A (in relation to AFIs), s.453B in relation to SFO officers, s.453C in relation to immigration officers and section 31 of the Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act 2005 (in relation to officers of Revenue and Customs).

<sup>11</sup> The definition of 'premises' is the same as in Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 s.23, and Article 25 to the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

(for example it is on the street), but the appropriate officer has reasonable grounds for suspecting that there is cash in a vehicle which satisfies the conditions in paragraph 19, and it appears to the officer that the vehicle is under the control of a person who is in or in the vicinity of the vehicle (see section 289(1D)); or

- the officer has reasonable grounds for suspecting that a person is carrying cash which satisfies the conditions in paragraph 19 (see section 289(2)).

19. The conditions in section 289(2) are that:

- the cash is recoverable property<sup>12</sup> or is intended by any person for use in unlawful conduct;<sup>13</sup> and
- the cash does not amount to less than the minimum amount specified in an order made by the Secretary of State (currently £1,000).<sup>14</sup> There is no maximum amount of cash that can be seized.

### **Limitations relating to searches of vehicles and persons**

20. Where a vehicle is not on private premises on which the officer is lawfully present, the search powers in relation to a vehicle only apply where the vehicle is in a place to which the public has access (such as on the street), or is within the environs of a dwelling, and the officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the person does not reside in that dwelling, and that the vehicle is there without the permission of the person who resides there. Otherwise the vehicle is on private property and the power to search premises is relevant instead.<sup>15</sup>

21. The powers conferred are civil in nature and exercisable only so far as is reasonably required for the purposes of finding relevant cash. In relation to vehicles being searched under section 289(1D), the officer may require the suspect to permit entry to the vehicle and permit a search of the vehicle, and in relation to a person suspected of carrying cash, the officer may require the person to permit a search of any article they have with them as well as permit a

---

<sup>12</sup> Cash is recoverable property if it is obtained through unlawful conduct or represents property obtained through unlawful conduct because the original property has been disposed of (see Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 s. 304 and -305).

<sup>13</sup> Conduct occurring in any part of the United Kingdom is 'unlawful conduct' if it is unlawful under the criminal law of that part. Conduct which occurs in a country or territory outside the United Kingdom and is unlawful under the criminal law applying in that country or territory, and if it occurred in a part of the United Kingdom, would be unlawful under the criminal law of that part, is also 'unlawful conduct' (see Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 s.241).

<sup>14</sup> The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (Recovery of Cash in Summary Proceedings: Minimum Amount) Order 2006 (SI 2006/1699). The statutory instrument should be made available along with the code. This amount may be amended by a further order made by the Secretary of State (under s. 303) – officers should ensure that they are aware of the current order.

<sup>15</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 s. 289(1).

search of their person.<sup>16</sup>

22. A refusal by a person to permit a search of their person, of premises or of a vehicle may in some instances constitute an offence, including but not limited to wilful obstruction of an officer in the exercise of a power or execution of a duty.<sup>17</sup> This would be a criminal matter and is not an issue for, or subject to, this code. Officers should be aware of other legislation and codes applicable in these circumstances.

### **Limitation on exercise of powers by officers of Revenue and Customs**

23. The powers to search for cash are exercisable by an officer of Revenue and Customs only if the officer has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the unlawful conduct through which the cash was obtained, or for which the cash is intended to be used, relates to an “assigned matter” within the meaning of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.
24. An “assigned matter” is any matter in relation to which the Commissioners or officers of Revenue and Customs have a power or duty (except for any matter relating to a devolved tax within the meaning of the Scotland Act 1998, or the Government of Wales Act 2006).<sup>18</sup> Assigned matters currently include:
  - Income tax, capital gains tax and other direct taxes;
  - VAT, excise and other indirect taxes and duties;
  - Child benefit and tax credits;
  - Investigation of money laundering.

However, this is not an exhaustive list of assigned matters.

### **Limitation on exercise of powers by immigration officers**

25. The powers to search for cash are exercisable by an immigration officer only if the officer has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the unlawful conduct through which the cash was obtained, or for which the cash is intended to be used, is conduct which both constitutes an offence and:
  - relates to the entitlement of one or more persons who are not nationals of the UK to enter, transit across, or be in, the UK (including conduct which relates to

---

<sup>16</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002ss.289(1D) and (3).

<sup>17</sup> See the Police Act 1996, s.89 (in relation to constables); the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, s.453A (in relation to AFIs), s.453B in relation to SFO officers, s.453C in relation to immigration officers and section 31 of the Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act 2005 (in relation to officers of Revenue and Customs).

<sup>18</sup> Customs and Excise Management Act 1979, s.1(1).

conditions or other controls on any such entitlement);

or

- is undertaken for the purposes of, or in relation to:
  - the British Nationality Act 1981;
  - the Hong Kong Act 1985;
  - the Hong Kong (War Wives and Widows) Act 1996;
  - the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1997;
  - the British Overseas Territories Act 2002; or any instrument made under any of those Acts.<sup>19</sup>

### **Limitations on exercise of powers by AFIs**

26. The powers to search for cash are exercisable by an AFI in relation to premises, vehicles or (as the case may be) persons in England and Wales only, but not Scotland. The exercise of these powers by AFIs in Northern Ireland is guided by the code issued by DoJNI under section 293A.

### **Reasonable grounds for suspicion**

27. In order to exercise the search powers an officer should have reasonable grounds for suspecting that relevant cash is on the premises or in a vehicle or being carried by a person.
28. All officers should recognise that searches are more likely to be effective, legitimate and secure public confidence when reasonable grounds for suspicion are based on a range of objective factors. The overall use of these powers is more likely to be effective when up-to-date and accurate intelligence or information is communicated to officers and they are well informed about local crime patterns. Local senior officers have a duty to ensure that those under their command who exercise search powers have access to such information, and the officers exercising the powers have a duty to acquaint themselves with that information.
29. Whether there are reasonable grounds for suspicion will depend on the circumstances in each case. There should be

---

<sup>19</sup> UK Borders Act 2007, s.24.

some objective basis for that suspicion based on facts, information and/or intelligence, which are relevant to the likelihood that the cash in question will be found, so that a reasonable person would be entitled to reach the same conclusion based on the same facts and information and/or intelligence. The officer should take into account such factors as how the person(s), premises or vehicle(s) were identified, previous intelligence regarding the person(s), vehicle(s) or premises, previous law enforcement involvement with the person(s), vehicle(s) or premises, and suspected links with criminal activities, whether in the UK or overseas. Officers should therefore be able to explain the basis for their suspicion by reference to intelligence or information about, or some specific behaviour by, the person concerned.

30. Reasonable suspicion can never be supported on the basis of personal factors alone without reliable supporting intelligence or information or some specific behaviour. For example, a person's race, religion or age, could not be used alone or in combination with other personal factors as the reason for searching that person. Reasonable suspicion could not be based on generalisations or stereotypical images of certain groups or categories of people being more likely to be involved in criminal activity.
31. This means that unless an appropriate officer has information or intelligence which provides a description of a person suspected of carrying property, the following cannot be used, alone or in combination with each other, or in combination with any other factor, as the reason for searching any individual, including any vehicle:
  - a person's physical appearance with regard, for example to any of the "relevant protected characteristics" set out in the Equality Act 2010, section 149, which are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation;
  - the fact that the person is known to have a previous conviction; and
  - generalisations or more stereotypical images that certain groups or categories of people are more likely to be involved in criminal activity.
32. Reasonable suspicion should normally be linked to accurate and current intelligence or information. It can sometimes exist without specific information or intelligence and on the basis of some level of generalisation stemming from the behaviour of a person. However, reasonable suspicion cannot be founded retrospectively.

### **Approval to search for cash**

33. Section 290 requires the officer to obtain prior “appropriate approval” before the exercise of any of the search powers under section 289, unless in the circumstances it is not practical to obtain that approval before exercising the power. “Appropriate approval” means approval from a judicial officer or (if that is not practical in any case) from a “senior officer”. A “judicial officer” is, in relation to England and Wales a justice of the peace; in relation to Northern Ireland, a lay magistrate<sup>20</sup> and in relation to Scotland, a sheriff.
34. The officer will need to explain that the search is necessary because they have reasonable grounds to suspect that there is cash that is recoverable property, or is intended for use in unlawful conduct, and that the amount is not less than the minimum amount. If, after obtaining prior approval and when it comes to the time to conduct the search, the grounds on which the officer obtained the prior approval no longer apply, the officer may not exercise the powers.
35. Prior approval is only likely to be impractical because of the immediacy of the circumstances of the case. This is more likely to be the case in relation to the search of a person or vehicle than the search of premises, but officers should assess each case on its merits. There should be no assumption that approval is impractical for all searches. Officers should carefully consider and record the reasons for any decision not to obtain prior approval.

### **Seeking judicial approval**

36. In order to obtain approval from a judicial officer, an officer will need to make contact with the justice’s chief executive for a magistrates’ court in England or Wales, the chief clerk for a magistrates’ court in Northern Ireland, or the clerk of a sheriff court in Scotland to arrange a hearing which can be held without notice and in private.
37. The usual reason to hold an application without notice and in private would be so as not to alert persons connected to the cash that such action is contemplated. Being so alerted may have the effect of the person(s) moving the cash and thereby frustrating the operation of the powers. However, if there is no concern that the cash could be moved, the person(s) connected to the cash should normally be notified of the intention to make an application for prior approval to search for cash. The officer will need to:
  - Identify themselves to the judicial officer (giving name, seniority, any warrant or other identifying number, and home station or place of work) – however an officer does not have to identify themselves if they come within

---

<sup>20</sup> Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002, s.10.

the provisions in POCA relating to the use of pseudonyms by officers of the NCA or members of staff of a relevant Director;<sup>21</sup>

- lodge their written application (having checked that the information on which the application relies is accurate, complete, recent and not provided maliciously or irresponsibly);
- explain to the judicial officer the reasonable grounds for suspicion that they have for undertaking the search;
- identify the person(s), premises or vehicle(s) to be searched; and
- answer any relevant questions that the judicial officer may have.

### **Seeking senior officer approval**

38. If it is not practical to seek prior judicial approval, appropriate approval may be given by a “senior officer”. A “senior officer” is:

- in relation to a search undertaken by a constable, a police officer of at least the rank of inspector;
- in relation to a search undertaken by an officer of Revenue and Customs, an officer of Revenue and Customs of a rank designated by the Commissioners for Revenue and Customs as equivalent to a police officer of at least the rank of inspector;
- in relation to a search undertaken by an immigration officer, an official of the Secretary of State who is a civil servant of the rank of at least Assistant Director;
- in relation to a search undertaken by an AFI, a member of the civilian staff of a police force in England and Wales (including the metropolitan police force), a member of staff of the City of London police force, or a member of staff of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, a senior police officer;<sup>22</sup>
- in relation to an AFI who is not a member of the civilian staff of a police force in England and Wales, an AFI who falls within a description specified in an order made by the Secretary of State under section 453. These officers are commonly/operationally known as SAOs (senior appropriate officers);
- in relation to an officer of the Serious Fraud Office, the Director of the Serious Fraud Office.

---

<sup>21</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, ss.449 and 449A. Relevant Director has the meaning given by section 352(5A); in relation to England and Wales, it means the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Director of the Serious Fraud Office; in relation to Northern Ireland it means the Director of the Serious Fraud Office or the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

<sup>22</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, s.290(4)(ba): within the meaning of Part 1 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 or a member of staff of the City of London Police.

37. The officer should explain to the senior officer the reasonable grounds for suspicion for undertaking the search. The senior officer should only give approval when satisfied that the relevant conditions are met. The senior officer should make a written record of the decision and the basis for making that decision. An oral approval should be supported by written approval as soon as that is reasonably practical. In addition, the written approval should set out why it was necessary to seek and then give oral approval in the first instance.

### **Issues of approval**

39. A prior approval to search given by a judicial officer will continue in force for the period specified, set according to the circumstances of the case. A senior officer approval should only continue in force for the time period required for the urgency of the case – if the search is not urgent then prior approval should be sought from a judicial officer.

### **Refusal of prior approval**

40. If an application for prior approval is refused (either by a judicial officer or a senior officer) the officer should not undertake a search or make a fresh application for a search of the same person(s), premises or vehicle(s) unless there are new reasonable grounds for suspicion. The officer, on any new application, should inform the judicial officer or the senior officer of the prior refusal and the reasons thereto. They should also detail any prior approval granted that did not lead to a search.

### **Prior approval impractical**

41. If prior approval by a senior officer for a search is impractical, a search may be conducted without approval. It is unlikely that approval by a senior officer will be impractical unless, for example, there is some problem in making contact with the senior officer. If a search is conducted without any prior approval from a senior officer, the officer should explain to a senior officer the reasons for the search and for not obtaining prior approval as soon as that is reasonably practical and, in any event, no later than 24 hours following the exercise of the power. The senior officer should make a written record of those reasons.
42. If prior approval has been obtained for one search power, that approval does not apply to the other search powers. For example, if prior judicial or senior officer approval was obtained for the search of a person and during that search the officer decides to undertake the search of a vehicle that



the person is in control of, separate prior approval is required for that search.

### **Reports to the “appointed person”**

43. If a search under section 289 is conducted without prior judicial approval (irrespective of whether senior officer approval has been obtained) the appropriate officer must prepare a report in the following circumstances:
  - if no cash is seized; or
  - any cash is seized is detained for no more than 48 hours.
44. Cash may not be detained for more than 48 hours<sup>23</sup> except by order of a judicial officer (section 295(1)); the application for an order is commonly known as a ‘detention hearing’.
45. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the requirement to make a report in these circumstances does not arise where, during the search for cash, a listed item of property is seized under section 303J and detained for more than 48 hours.
46. If a written report is required, it should detail the information and circumstances which led the officer to believe that the search powers were exercisable and that it was not practical to obtain prior judicial approval, these factors could include:
  - why the officer was on the premises when the search took place;
  - the reasonable grounds for suspicion; and
  - why there was a need for a search without prior judicial approval.
47. If senior officer approval is obtained, the report should also state which senior officer gave their approval together with the senior officer’s reasons for that approval.
48. If no senior officer approval was obtained, this should be set out in the report together with the reasons for the approval not being obtained as well as which senior officer was subsequently informed and when they were informed of the search.

---

<sup>23</sup> When calculating the period of 48 hours, no account is taken of Saturday, Sunday, Christmas Day, Good Friday or any day that is a bank holiday under the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971 – which is either expressly listed or by royal proclamation, or is prescribed as a court holiday in a sheriff court in Scotland in the sheriff court district where the cash is seized, pursuant to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, s.295(1).

49. A report is required in relation to each exercise of the powers. In some cases, multiple searches from one investigation are carried out simultaneously in different locations, or multiple persons are searched at the same time, or a single search may be carried out by several officers. For the purposes of reporting to the “appointed person” in such cases, officers should consider whether a single report or multiple reports are the most appropriate way of making the report to the “appointed person”. The information should be presented in the way which is most helpful to the “appointed person”, but which is transparent about the facts pertaining to the case, and the decision making process. Where appropriate, cross- references to linked reports or relevant information appearing elsewhere in the report should be highlighted to bring it to the attention of the “appointed person”.
50. For simultaneous searches at multiple locations, the justification for searching each location without prior judicial approval should be considered in relation to each location separately. For simultaneous searches of multiple persons, the justification for searching each person without prior judicial approval should be considered separately. However, there may be an overarching justification underlying the decision to conduct the searches, for example, to prevent the destruction of evidence at other locations owned by the same person; or in the case of a group of persons suspected of a common enterprise. In such cases, one report might be more appropriate. However, the justification for searching each location or each person without prior judicial approval should be set out separately. If there is no thread of common justification relating to the searches, separate reports would be more appropriate.
51. Where a single search is carried out by several officers, a single report to the “appointed person” would be appropriate. Such a situation may arise as the result of a decision by one officer that prior judicial approval is not practical, and other officers are asked to assist because of the size of the search. In such cases the officer who took the decision to proceed should make the report. It is less likely that several different officers working on an investigation will have come to separate independent decisions about carrying out a search, but if that were the case, then each officer should make their own report. If there were separate justifications, because of different strands of investigation carried out by different officers, then those justifications should be set out separately in the report or reports.
52. For cases where the powers were exercised in England and Wales, the written report should be submitted to the

person appointed by the Secretary of State. Reports should be made to:

The Appointed Person  
c/o Criminal Finances Unit  
Serious & Organised Crime  
Group 6th Floor Peel  
Building  
Home Office  
2 Marsham  
Street  
LONDON  
SW1P 4DF

53. For cases where the powers were exercised in Scotland, the written report should be submitted to the person appointed by the Scottish Ministers. Reports should be made to:

The Appointed Person for  
Scotland c/o Scottish  
Government  
Organised Crime Unit 1WR,  
St Andrew's House  
2 Regent Road  
EDINBURGH  
EH1 3DG

54. For cases where the powers were exercised in Northern Ireland, the report should be submitted to the person appointed by DoJNI. Reports should be made to:

The Appointed Person for Northern  
Ireland c/o Department of Justice  
Organised Crime  
Branch Block B  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
BELFAST  
BT4 3SG

55. The written report should be submitted as soon as is reasonably practical and, in any event, no later than 14 days following the exercise of the power.
56. Following submission of the written report, the officer should also submit any supplementary information which the "appointed person" reasonably requires the officer to submit, within 14 days of the request for the supplementary information. The officer should co-operate, facilitate and assist the "appointed person", wherever possible, so that the "appointed person" can effectively

discharge their role and responsibilities.

57. The officer and “appointed person” should keep a copy of the report in a safe and secure place in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2019.

### **Search of a person – section 289(3)**

58. Where the power to search a person is exercised under section 289(3), the officer may (so far as they think necessary or expedient for the purposes of searching for cash to which the power applies) require the person:
- to permit a search of any article with the person; or
  - to permit a search of the person.
59. A refusal to permit a search may in some instances constitute an offence (including but not limited to) wilful obstruction of an officer in the execution of a duty or exercise of a power.<sup>24</sup> This would be a criminal matter and is not an issue for, or subject to, this code. Officers should be aware of other legislation and codes applicable in these circumstances.
60. The officer may detain the person to carry out the search but the intrusion on the person’s liberty should be for no longer than is necessary, unless the person is arrested or detained under another power.

### **Steps prior to search of a person**

61. If the officer has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the person has relevant cash concealed on their person, the officer should take the following steps:
- the officer should give the person their name or other identifier, subject to the provisions in POCA relating to pseudonyms of officers of the NCA and members of staff of a relevant Director;<sup>25</sup>
  - the person should be given the name and location of the office or station to which the officer is attached;

---

<sup>24</sup> See the Police Act 1996, s.89 (in relation to constables); the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, s.453A (in relation to AFIs), s.453B in relation to SFO officers, s.453C in relation to immigration officers; section 31 of the Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act 2005 (in relation to officers of Revenue and Customs) and Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998, s.66.

<sup>25</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, ss.449 and 449A. Relevant Director has the meaning given by section 352(5A): in relation to England and Wales, it means the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Director of the Serious Fraud Office; in relation to Northern Ireland it means the Director of the Serious Fraud Office or the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

- the person should be informed that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that they are carrying cash on their person which is not less than the minimum amount and is recoverable property or is intended for use in unlawful conduct;
  - the person should be given a clear explanation of the reasonable grounds for suspecting that the cash is recoverable property or is intended for use in unlawful conduct;
  - the person should be informed that they can be required to permit a search under section 289 for the purposes of finding such cash and (where applicable) warned that failure to comply could amount to a criminal offence;
  - the officer should give or show the person any document authorising the search (if applicable);
  - the officer should ask the person to confirm or deny whether they have relevant cash on their person;
  - the officer should allow the person the opportunity to produce and hand over the relevant cash, and
  - the officer should inform the person of their entitlement to a copy of the record of the search.
62. These steps do not necessarily have to be followed in the order presented. The officer will have flexibility depending on the circumstances of an individual case, but all of the steps should be undertaken prior to the search.
63. Officers not in uniform should show their warrant cards or other suitable form of identification.
64. If the person to be searched does not appear to understand what is being said or the officer has doubts as to the person's ability to speak and/or understand English,<sup>26</sup> or that the person is deaf or has difficulty with hearing or speaking, the officer should take reasonable steps to ensure that the person understands. Where desirable and practical someone who can act as an interpreter should be identified, but if no such person can be identified, the search may not proceed if the officer cannot determine whether the person understands. In all cases, the officer should record any difficulties encountered and the reasons for proceeding with any search or for abandoning one.

### **Conduct of searches – persons**

65. The power to search a person should be used fairly, courteously, responsibly, respectfully and without discrimination against the person concerned. The person should be searched by a person of the same sex unless the

---

<sup>26</sup> Or Welsh if the search is conducted in Wales.

contrary has been specifically agreed by the person to be searched. This agreement should be obtained in writing. The co-operation of the person to be searched should be sought in every case, even if the person initially objects to the search. A forcible search may be made only if it has been established that the person is unwilling to co-operate. If the officer believes they will be in danger undertaking the search, they should take appropriate precautions.

66. An officer who has reasonable grounds for suspicion may detain the person only for so long as is necessary to carry out the search.<sup>27</sup> Before carrying out the search the officer may ask questions about the person's behaviour or presence in circumstances which gave rise to the suspicion.
67. As a result of questioning the detained person, the reasonable grounds for suspicion necessary to detain that person may be confirmed or, because of a satisfactory explanation, be eliminated. However, reasonable grounds for suspicion cannot be founded retrospectively, the suspicion should exist prior to the questioning.
68. If, as a result of questioning before a search, or other circumstances come to the attention of the officer, there cease to be reasonable grounds for suspecting that the person is carrying relevant cash that is recoverable property or intended for use in unlawful conduct, no search of the person may take place. In the absence of any other lawful power to detain, the person in such circumstances is free to leave and should be so informed.
69. There is no power to detain a person under POCA so that grounds can be identified for a search. If reasonable grounds for suspicion emerge during an encounter with a person, the officer may search the person, even though no grounds existed when the encounter began. If an officer detains someone for the purpose of a search, they should inform the person as soon as the detention begins.
70. The length of time for which a person may be detained should be only for so long as is necessary for the exercise of the search. The thoroughness and extent of a search will depend on the type and amount of relevant cash that is suspected of being carried. If the person is being detained under some other power, this aspect of the code may not apply.
71. A person may be searched only to the extent necessary to achieve the object of the search. A search may not continue once the relevant cash has been found and no

---

<sup>27</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, ss.289(3) to (5).

search may continue once the officer is satisfied that the relevant cash is not on the person. This does not prevent a further search with prior approval if practical if new information comes to light justifying such a search.

72. This search power under section 289 does not extend to requiring a person to undergo an intimate search or strip search.<sup>28</sup> An intimate search is one involving a physical (and not just a visual) examination of a person's body orifices. A strip search is any search that is not an intimate search but involves the removal of an article of clothing that:

- is being worn (wholly or partly) on the trunk; and
- is being so worn either next to the skin or next to an article of underwear.<sup>29</sup>

73. If a search reveals an item reasonably suspected of containing relevant cash but this is in an article of clothing being worn on the trunk and next to the skin or next to an article of underwear which is next to the skin (for example a money belt) the officer can only invite the person to remove it. If the person refuses there is no power to force the person to remove it.

74. A person should not be asked to remove any article of clothing in public other than an outer coat, jacket or gloves. A search in public of a person's clothing that has not been removed should be restricted to a superficial examination of outer garments. This does not, however, prevent an officer from placing their hand inside the pockets of the outer clothing, or feeling round the inside of collars, socks and shoes if this is reasonable in the circumstances. Subject to the restrictions on the removal of headgear, a person's hair may also be searched in public. Particular sensitivity should be exercised where the person being searched is wearing items of clothing which the person says, or the officer believes, are of religious significance.

75. If, on reasonable grounds, it is considered necessary to conduct a more thorough search this should be undertaken out of the view of the public.

76. Any search involving the removal of more than an outer coat, jacket, gloves, headgear or footwear may only be conducted by an officer of the same sex as the person searched. The search may not be made in the presence of anyone of the opposite sex unless the person being searched specifically agrees. This agreement should be obtained in writing.

---

<sup>28</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, s.289(8).

<sup>29</sup> Customs and Excise Management Act s.164(5).

77. If the officer discovers relevant cash during a search they should give the person who has possession of it an opportunity to provide an explanation for its ownership, origins, purpose and destination. If, in a particular case, the questioning covers whether the person has committed an offence, it is likely to constitute questioning that requires a caution.

### **Recording requirements – searches of a person**

74. An officer who has carried out a search under section 289 should make a written record of the search at the time, unless there are exceptional circumstances that could make this impractical. If such a written record is not made at the time then the officer should do so as soon as is reasonably practical thereafter and also set out the reasons for the delay in making the written record. There may be situations in which it is not practical to obtain all the information necessary to complete a written record, but the officer should make every reasonable effort to do so and, if necessary, complete a partial record.
75. The following information should always be included in the search record even if the person does not wish to provide any personal details (for the purposes of completing the search record, there is no requirement to record the name, address and date of birth of the person searched or the person in charge of a vehicle which is searched. The person is under no obligation to provide this information and they should not be asked to provide it for the purpose of completing this record):
- the name, address and date of birth of the person searched, (if provided) and, in appropriate cases, their estimated height, weight, build, clothing and distinguishing features;
  - a note of the person's self-defined ethnic background (if provided);
  - the date, time, duration and place that the person was first detained;
  - the date, time and place the person was searched (if different);
  - the names and details of any witnesses;
  - the grounds for conducting the search;
  - whether the prior approval of a judicial officer or senior officer was obtained. If a search is conducted without prior judicial approval, the reason for not obtaining such approval;
  - the outcome of the search (for example seizure of cash, no further action);
  - a list/description of seized cash (if any) preferably signed by the person;



- any explanation given by the person as to the ownership, origins, purpose and destination of any relevant cash found;
  - details of any damage to property or injury to person caused during the search and the circumstances in which it was caused;
  - the identity of the officer or other identifier and others present, subject to the provisions in POCA relating to pseudonyms of officers of the NCA and members of staff of a relevant Director;<sup>30</sup> and
  - any other relevant information.
76. A record is required for each person searched. The record of the grounds for making a search should explain, with sufficient detail, the reasonable grounds for suspecting the person concerned was carrying relevant cash by reference to the person's behaviour and/or other circumstances. If a person is detained with a view to performing a search, but the search is not carried out due to the reasonable grounds for suspicion being eliminated as a result of speaking to any person, a record should still be made.
77. A copy of any written record made at the time should be given immediately to the person who has been searched unless it is impractical to do so or would jeopardise a wider ongoing operation or investigation. If a record is not made at the time, the person should be told of the reasons and also how they can apply for a copy of the record once it is made. The officer should ask for the name, address and date of birth of the person searched, but there is no obligation on a person to provide these details and no power of detention if the person is unwilling to do so.
78. When an officer makes a record of the search electronically and is unable to produce a copy of the form at the time of the search, the officer should explain how the person can obtain a full copy of the record of the search and give the person a receipt which contains:
- a unique reference number and guidance on how to obtain a full copy of the report;
  - the name of the officer who carried out the search (subject to the provisions in POCA relating to pseudonyms of officers of the NCA and members of staff of a relevant Director);<sup>31</sup> and

---

<sup>30</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, ss.449 and 449A. Relevant Director has the meaning given by section 352(5A): in relation to England and Wales, it means the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Director of the Serious Fraud Office; in relation to Northern Ireland it means the Director of the Serious Fraud Office or the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

<sup>31</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, ss. 449 and 449(A). Relevant Director has the meaning given by s.352(5A): in relation to England and Wales, it means the Director of Public Prosecutions or

- the power used to search them.
79. In the case of searches undertaken by constables the record of the search should be made, copied or referred to in the search register. In the case of searches undertaken by other officers the record of the search should be maintained in a suitable form, i.e. the record should be easily accessible, retrievable and subject to reasonable rules for storage, in particular in relation to the length of time before the record is destroyed.
80. In order to promote public confidence in the use of the powers, bodies using these powers should make the records available (anonymised as necessary) to be scrutinised by representatives of the community, and to explain the use of the powers at a local level in response to a reasonable request.

### **Search of premises (including vehicles located on those premises) – section 289(1)**

#### **General**

81. No right of entry is conferred by section 289 in order to search premises for relevant cash. An officer should already be lawfully on the premises and, unless it was not practical to obtain it, should have prior approval to conduct the search under section 290.<sup>32</sup> This could include a search of premises undertaken with the consent of a person entitled to grant entry to the premises. It could also include a search carried out where an officer has exercised a power of entry conferred by a search warrant or power of entry conferred under some other legislation.
82. A refusal to allow a search of premises may in some instances constitute an offence (including but not limited to) wilful obstruction of an officer in the execution of a duty and exercise of a power.<sup>33</sup> This would be a criminal offence and is not an issue for, or subject to, this code. Officers should be aware of other legislation and codes applicable in these circumstances.

---

the Director of the Serious Fraud Office; in relation to Northern Ireland it means the Director of the Serious Fraud Office or the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

<sup>32</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, ss. 449 and 449(A). Relevant Director has the meaning given by s.352(5A): in relation to England and Wales, it means the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Director of the Serious Fraud Office; in relation to Northern Ireland it means the Director of the Serious Fraud Office or the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

<sup>33</sup> See the Police Act 1996, s.89 (in relation to constables); the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, s.453A (in relation to AFIs), s.453B in relation to SFO officers, s.453C in relation to immigration officers; section 31 of the Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act 2005 (in relation to officers of Revenue and Customs) and Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998, s.66.

83. The term “premises” has the same meaning as in section 23 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and Article 25 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Order 1989. This includes any place and, in particular, would include any vehicle located on the premises, but note that there is a separate power under section 289(1A) to (1E) providing a power to search vehicles where the vehicle is not situated on private premises. See paragraph 105 on searches of vehicles using this power.
84. If the officer proposes to search premises with the consent of a person who is entitled to grant entry to the premises, the consent should be secured in writing before the search takes place. It is for the officer to make any necessary enquiries in order to be satisfied that the person is in a position to give consent. The officer should record their enquiries, together with any responses, in writing.
85. Before seeking consent the officer in charge of the search should explain to the person the purpose of the proposed search and its extent. This information should be as specific as possible. The person concerned should be clearly informed and should clearly understand that they are not obliged to give consent and that any consent given can be withdrawn at any time, including before the search starts or while it is underway. The officer should record what information they provided to the person, together with any responses, in writing.
86. Before undertaking a search the officer should make reasonable enquiries to:
- establish if anything is known about the likely owner(s) or occupier(s) of the premises or someone else entitled to grant entry and the nature of the premises themselves;
  - establish if the premises have been searched previously and when this occurred; and
  - obtain any other relevant information.
87. An officer cannot enter and search premises or continue to search premises if they entered with consent (and not under any other power), and that consent was given under duress or misrepresentation, is withdrawn, or it becomes known that the person who gave consent was not actually in a position to do so. If the search ends because of those reasons, the officer should record this in writing.

### **Steps prior to search of premises**

88. If the officer has reasonable grounds for suspecting that

relevant cash is on premises, the officer should take the following steps:

- the officer should give the person who is entitled to grant entry to the premises their name or other identifier, subject to the provisions in POCA relating to pseudonyms of officers of the NCA and members of staff of a relevant Director;<sup>34</sup>
- the person should be given the name and location of the office or station to which the officer is attached;
- the person should be informed that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the premises contains cash which is not less than the minimum amount and is recoverable property or is intended for use in unlawful conduct;
- the person should be given a clear explanation of the reasonable grounds for suspicion;
- the person should be informed that the officer has the power to search the premises under section 289(1) for the purposes of finding such cash and (where applicable) warned that failure to comply could amount to a criminal offence;
- the officer should give or show the person any document authorising the search (if applicable);
- the officer should ask the person to confirm or deny whether there is cash on the premises which is either recoverable property or is intended by any purpose for use in unlawful conduct;
- the officer should allow the person the opportunity to produce and hand over the relevant cash; and
- the officer should inform the person of their entitlement to a copy of the record of the search.

89. The officer should ideally provide this information to the person who gave consent to entry to the premises searched, or if consent was not required, to the person in charge of the premises searched, being the owner or occupier as appropriate.
90. These steps do not necessarily have to be followed in the order presented. The officer will have flexibility depending on the circumstances of an individual case, but all of the steps should be undertaken prior to the search of the premises.
91. Officers not in uniform should show their warrant cards or other suitable form of identification.

---

<sup>34</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, ss.449 and 449A. Relevant Director has the meaning given by section 352(5A): in relation to England and Wales, it means the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Director of the Serious Fraud Office; in relation to Northern Ireland it means the Director of the Serious Fraud Office or the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

92. If the person does not appear to understand what is being said, or the officer has doubts as to the person's ability to speak and/or understand English<sup>35</sup>, or that the person is deaf or has difficulty with hearing or speaking, the officer should take reasonable steps to ensure that the person understands. Where desirable and practical, someone who can act as an interpreter should be identified, but if no such person can be identified, the search may not proceed if the officer cannot determine whether the person understands. In all cases, the officer should record any difficulties encountered and the reasons for proceeding with any search or abandoning one.

### **Conduct of searches – premises**

93. A search should be made at a reasonable hour, for example, in the case of domestic premises, outside of normal sleeping hours and in the case of business premises during normal business hours, unless this might frustrate the purpose of the search. If a search takes place at an unreasonable hour, the officer should record their reasons for doing so in writing.
94. A person is not required to be cautioned prior to being asked questions that are necessary solely for the purpose of furthering the proper and effective conduct of a search. Examples would include questions to discover who is the owner, or occupier, or person entitled to grant access to specified premises, to find a key to open a locked drawer or cupboard, or to otherwise seek co-operation during a search or to determine whether cash is liable to be seized.
95. Premises may be searched only to the extent necessary to achieve the object of the search. A search may not continue once the relevant cash has been found and no search may continue once the officer in charge of the search is satisfied that relevant cash is not on the premises. This does not prevent a further search, with prior approval if practical, if new information comes to light justifying such a search.
96. Searches should be conducted with due consideration for the premises and privacy of the owner or occupier and with no more disturbance than is necessary.
97. The person should be asked whether they would like a friend, neighbour or other person to witness the search. However, a search need not be unreasonably delayed for this purpose (unless the officer is relying on the person's consent to conduct the search, in which case the person is entitled to refuse consent until a friend, neighbour or other person arrives to witness the search). The person

---

<sup>35</sup> Or Welsh if the search is conducted in Wales.

nominated should be allowed to witness the search unless the officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the presence of the person asked for would significantly hinder the search, any connected investigation or endanger other officers or people. A record of the action taken, including the grounds for refusing a request, should be made on the premises search record. This requirement also relates to business and commercial premises if practical, as well as private addresses.

### **Leaving the premises**

98. The officer should, before leaving the premises, be satisfied that they are secure either by arranging for the owner or occupier or person entitled to grant access or their agent to be present or by any other appropriate means.

### **Recording requirements – search of premises**

99. An officer who has carried out a search under section 289 should make a written record of the search at the time, unless there are exceptional circumstances that could make this impractical. If such a written record is not made at the time then the officer should do so as soon as is reasonably practical thereafter and also set out the reasons for the delay in making the written record. There may be situations in which it is not practical to obtain all the information necessary to complete a written record, but the officer should make every reasonable effort to do so and, if necessary complete a partial record.
100. The following information should always be included in the search record (for the purposes of completing the search record, there is no requirement to record the name, address and date of birth of any person on the premises which is searched. The person is under no obligation to provide this information and they should not be asked to provide it for the purpose of completing this record):
- the address of the premises searched, and if relevant and possible the part of those premises searched (where a vehicle is searched because it is on the premises, the location of the vehicle);
  - the date, time and duration of the search;
  - the name of the officer and the names of any other persons involved in the search, subject to the provisions in POCA relating to pseudonyms of officers of the NCA and members of staff of a relevant Director;<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, s.449 and 449A. Relevant Director has the meaning

- the grounds for conducting the search;
- the prior approval of a judicial officer or senior officer. If a search is conducted without prior judicial approval, the reason for not obtaining such approval;
- the names and dates of birth of any people on the premises if they are known;
- if appropriate, the written consent to undertake the search together with what information was given to the person about the search and their responses;
- the name and details of any witness;
- any grounds for refusing the person's request to have someone present during the search (if the consent of the person is not the basis for conducting the search);
- any explanation given by the person as to the ownership, origins, purpose and destination of any relevant cash found;
- confirmation that the premises were left secure and by what means;
- details of any damage to property or injury to persons caused during the search and the circumstances in which it was caused;
- the outcome of the search (for example, seizure of cash, no further action);
- a list/description of seized cash (if any) preferably signed by the person; and
- any other relevant information.

101. When an officer makes a record of the search electronically and is unable to produce a copy of the form at the time of the search, the officer should explain how the person can obtain a full copy of the record of the search and give the person a receipt which contains:

- a unique reference number and guidance on how to obtain a full copy of the report;
- the name of the officer who carried out the search (subject to the provisions in POCA relating to pseudonyms of officers of the NCA and members of staff of a relevant Director;<sup>37</sup> and
- the power used to search the premises.

102. Unless it is impractical to do so or it would jeopardise a

---

given by section 352(5A): in relation to England and Wales, it means the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Director of the Serious Fraud Office; in relation to Northern Ireland it means the Director of the Serious Fraud Office or the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

<sup>37</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, s.449 and 449A. Relevant Director has the meaning given by section 352(5A): in relation to England and Wales, it means the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Director of the Serious Fraud Office; in relation to Northern Ireland it means the Director of the Serious Fraud Office or the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

wider ongoing operation or investigation, a copy of a record of the grounds for making the search should be given immediately to the person who gave consent to entry to the premises searched, or if consent was not required to the person in charge of the premises searched, being the owner or occupier as appropriate. If a record is not made at the time the person should be informed how they can apply for a copy of the record once it is made. If the search is not carried out due to the reasonable grounds for suspicion being eliminated as a result of speaking to any person, a record should still be made.

103. In the case of searches undertaken by constables the record of the search should be made, copied or referred to in the search register. In the case of searches undertaken by other officers the record of the search should be maintained in a suitable form, i.e. the record should be easily accessible, retrievable and subject to reasonable rules for storage, in particular in relation to the length of time before the record is destroyed.
104. In order to promote public confidence in the use of the powers, bodies using these powers should make the records available (anonymised as required) to be scrutinised by representatives of the community, and to explain the use of the powers at a local level in response to a reasonable request.

## **Search of Vehicles**

### **section 289(1D)**

#### **General**

105. An officer has no power to forcibly enter a vehicle. Where the officer has lawful authority to be present on private premises on which a vehicle is located and has reasonable grounds for suspecting that a vehicle contains relevant cash that may be seized under section 294, and it appears to the officer that the vehicle is under the control of a person who is in or in the vicinity of the vehicle, the officer may require that person to permit entry to, and a search of, the vehicle.
106. In these circumstances, the search power applies only where the vehicle is in a place to which the public has access, or is within the environs of a dwelling, and the officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the person does not reside in that dwelling, and that the vehicle is there without the permission of the person who does reside there. Otherwise the vehicle is considered to be on private property and the power to search premises is relevant



instead (see section 289(1)).

107. A refusal to permit entry to the vehicle may in some instances constitute an offence (including but not limited to) wilful obstruction of an officer in the execution of a duty or exercise of a power.<sup>38</sup> This would be a criminal offence and is not an issue for, or subject to, this code. Officers should be aware of other legislation and codes applicable in these circumstances.

### **Steps prior to search of a vehicle**

108. If the officer has reasonable grounds for suspecting that a vehicle contains relevant cash, the officer should take the following steps:
- the officer should give the person in control of the vehicle their name or other identifier, subject to the provisions in POCA relating to pseudonyms of officers of the NCA and members of staff of a relevant Director;<sup>39</sup>
  - the person should be given the name and location of the office or station to which the officer is attached;
  - the person should be informed that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the vehicle contains cash which is not less than the minimum amount and is recoverable property or is intended by any person for use in unlawful conduct;
  - the person should be given a clear explanation of the grounds for suspecting that the vehicle contains relevant cash;
  - the person should be given a clear explanation of the grounds for reasonable suspicion that the cash is recoverable property or is intended for use in unlawful conduct;
  - the person should be informed that the vehicle can be searched under section 289 for the purposes of finding such cash and (where applicable) warned that failure to comply could amount to a criminal offence;
  - the officer should give or show the person any document authorising the search (if applicable);
  - the officer should ask the person to confirm or deny whether there is relevant cash in the vehicle;

---

<sup>38</sup> See the Police Act 1996, s.89 (in relation to constables); Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, s.453A (in relation to AFIs), s. 453B (in relation to SFO officers), s.453C (in relation to immigration officers); and Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act 2005, s.31 (in relation to officers of Revenue and Customs).

<sup>39</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, ss.449 and 449A. Relevant Director has the meaning given by section 352(5A): in relation to England and Wales, it means the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Director of the Serious Fraud Office; in relation to Northern Ireland it means the Director of the Serious Fraud Office or the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

- the officer should allow the person the opportunity to produce and hand over any relevant cash; and
  - the officer should inform the person in control of the vehicle of their entitlement to a copy of the record of the search.
109. These steps do not necessarily have to be followed in the order presented. The officer will have flexibility depending on the circumstances of an individual case, but all the steps should be undertaken prior to the search of the vehicle.
110. Officers not in uniform should show their warrant cards or other suitable form of identification.
111. If the person to be searched does not appear to understand what is being said or the officer has doubts as to the person's ability to speak and/or understand English,<sup>40</sup> or that the person is deaf or has difficulty with hearing or speaking, the officer should take reasonable steps to ensure that the person understands. Where desirable and practical, someone who can act as an interpreter should be identified, but if no such person can be identified, the search may not proceed if the officer is in any doubt as to the person's understanding. In all cases, the officer should record any difficulties encountered and the reasons for proceeding with any search or abandoning one.

### **Conduct of searches – vehicles**

112. Vehicles may be searched only to the extent necessary to achieve the object of the search. A search may not continue once the object of the search has been found and no search may continue once the officer is satisfied that relevant cash is not in the vehicle. This does not prevent a further search, with prior approval if practical, if new information comes to light justifying such a search.
113. Searches should be conducted with due consideration for the vehicle and the person in control of it. Searches should be conducted with no more disturbance than is necessary. The officer should, before leaving the vehicle, be satisfied that it is secure by arranging for the person in control of the vehicle to be present or by any other appropriate means.

### **Recording requirements – search of vehicles**

114. An officer should make a written record of the search, at the time of the search, unless there are exceptional

---

<sup>40</sup> Or Welsh if the search is conducted in Wales.

circumstances that could make this impractical. If such a written record is not made at the time then the officer should do so as soon as is reasonably practical thereafter and also set out the reasons for the delay in making the written record. There may be situations in which it is not practical to obtain all the information necessary to complete a written record, but the officer should make every reasonable effort to do so and, if necessary, complete a partial record.

115. The following information should always be included in the search record even if the person does not wish to provide any personal details (for the purposes of completing the search record, there is no requirement to record the name, address and date of birth of the person searched or the person in charge of a vehicle which is searched. The person is under no obligation to provide this information and they should not be asked to provide it for the purpose of completing this record):

- the location of the vehicle searched;
- the vehicle registration number;
- the date, time and duration of the search;
- the name of the officer and the names of any other persons involved in the search, subject to the provisions in POCA relating to pseudonyms of officers of the NCA<sup>41</sup> and members of staff of a relevant Director;
- the grounds for conducting the search;
- the prior approval of a judicial officer or senior officer. If a search is conducted without prior judicial approval, the reason for not obtaining such approval;
- the names and dates of birth of any person(s) in control of the vehicle if they are known;
- the names and details of any witnesses;
- if appropriate, the written consent to undertake the search together with what information was given to the person(s) in control of the vehicle and their responses;
- details of any damage to property or injury to person(s) caused during the search and the circumstances in which it was caused;
- the outcome of the search (for example, seizure of cash, no further action);
- a list/description of seized cash (if any) preferably signed by the person(s) in control of the vehicle;
- any explanation given by the person(s) in control of the

---

<sup>41</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, ss.449 and 449A. Relevant Director has the meaning given by section 352(5A): in relation to England and Wales, it means the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Director of the Serious Fraud Office; in relation to Northern Ireland it means the Director of the Serious Fraud Office or the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

vehicle as to the ownership, origins, purpose and destination of any relevant cash found;

- confirmation that the vehicle was left secured and by what means; and
- any other relevant information.

116. When an officer makes a record of the search electronically and is unable to produce a copy of the form at the time of the search, the officer should explain how the person can obtain a full copy of the record of the search and give the person a receipt which contains:

- a unique reference number and guidance on how to obtain a full copy of the report;
- the name of the officer who carried out the search (subject to the provisions in POCA relating to pseudonyms of officers of the NCA and members of staff of a relevant Director;<sup>42</sup> and
- the power used to search the vehicle.

117. Unless it is impractical to do so or it would jeopardise a wider ongoing operation or investigation, the person(s) in control of the vehicle should be provided with a copy of the record. If a record is not made at the time the person should be told how they can apply for a copy of the record once it is made. If the search is not carried out due to the reasonable grounds for suspicion being eliminated as a result of speaking to any person, a written record should still be made.

118. In the case of searches undertaken by constables the record of the search should be made, copied or referred to in the search register. In the case of searches undertaken by other officers the record of the search should be maintained in a suitable form, i.e. the record should be easily accessible, retrievable and subject to reasonable rules for storage, in particular in relation to the length of time before the record is destroyed.

119. In order to promote public confidence in the use of the powers, bodies using these powers should make the records (anonymised as required) available to be scrutinised by representatives of the community, and to explain the use of the powers at a local level in response to a reasonable request.

---

<sup>42</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, ss.449 and 449A. Relevant Director has the meaning given by section 352(5A): in relation to England and Wales, it means the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Director of the Serious Fraud Office; in relation to Northern Ireland it means the Director of the Serious Fraud Office or the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

