



# Security Practice Guidance

## CELL SEARCHING (Frontline Staff)

August 2021



### PURPOSE

To support establishments in their recovery journey and help staff refresh and maintain their knowledge of effective Cell Searching.



### LEARNING

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, prisons have experienced significant disruptions to regimes and ways of working, requiring adaptations to policy and practice.

Staff from operational and other professions have shared concerns about the potential **loss of knowledge and experience in conducting basic, and key, security tasks**. An extended period of change appears to have caused uncertainty around how procedures should be applied and what they will look like as we move through the stages of recovery and return to a 'new normal'.



### REFRESHING AND MAINTAINING PRACTICE

#### BEFORE

- You will be briefed by a security manager or orderly officer prior to being deployed to an intelligence-led search.
- Ensure you have the appropriate kit for your duties, including searching paperwork, search tool kits, gloves, evidence bags, weapons tubes, radio, Body Worn Video Cameras etc. Is the prisoner's property card required? If so, obtain from reception.
- On arrival to the unit, inform staff of your purpose and read the observation book. Note if there are any issues on the unit you need to be aware of.
- Establish the location of the prisoner, collect them from work or education if required.
- Inform colleagues of the cell location you are going to. This is necessary in the event of an incident, fire or call for assistance.
- Consider the risk of confrontation that may be posed if prisoners are on the landing. It may be useful for regular staff to accompany you to the cell as they may have a positive relationship with the prisoner.
- Additional staff may be required for double-cell occupancy.
- Discuss and agree a plan with your colleague. Use the door as a starting point, work your way around the accommodation searching all of its contents systematically and thoroughly.
- Ensure you are aware of evidence handling procedures in the event of a find.
- Shoot the bolt BEFORE you enter the cell, this will ensure the door will not shut and lock behind you.

## DURING

The way that people perceive us to be using our authority makes a huge difference to whether they respect this, and the likelihood they will willingly cooperate and comply.



Further information can be found in the Cell Searching leaflet and [Procedural Justice](#) intranet page.

- Explain to the prisoner why you are there and the process you will follow. **RESPECT NEUTRALITY TRUSTWORTHY MOTIVES**
- Ask if there is anything you should be aware of e.g. religious articles. Ask for the items to be opened out in your presence by the prisoner. **RESPECT VOICE TRUSTWORTHY MOTIVES**
- Ask the prisoner if they have any questions, and if they have anything they shouldn't in their cell, including anything that may hurt you (needles, sharps, weapons etc.). **VOICE**
- In a double cell, ask both prisoners to identify their beds, lockers, medications etc. **VOICE**
- A good approach is to search the bed together. When clear, use as a sterile area and place items on the bed when checked.
- Work your way around the accommodation searching all of its contents systematically and thoroughly.
- Be respectful of the prisoner's belongings and do not damage them during the search or leave the cell in an unfit state, as this can lead to confrontation. **RESPECT**
- Full searches must be completed by gender appropriate staff members. Afterwards, locate prisoner in a neutral location – i.e. an empty cell. **RESPECT**
- Use the search as an opportunity to check cell services are satisfactory from a decency perspective. **RESPECT TRUSTWORTHY MOTIVES**

## AFTER

- Collect the prisoner and ask them to confirm they are satisfied that nothing is damaged and sign the search form to that effect. **RESPECT TRUSTWORTHY MOTIVES**
- If an unauthorised item is found, explain this to the prisoner including the reasons that it is being removed and the next steps that will be taken. **NEUTRALITY TRUSTWORTHY MOTIVES**
- Ensure any search tools are accounted for and put away.
- Advise colleagues of any change in location and update necessary records (i.e. IRS for finds or Planet FM for repairs).

## FURTHER INFORMATION

- [PSI-09-2016-Cell-Area-and-Vehicle-Searching](#)

### Issued by

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