



Security Practice Guidance

SEARCHING OF THE PERSON (Frontline Staff)

August 2021



PURPOSE

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



LEARNING

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

Staff from both 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 and variation in practices 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

- Familiarise yourself with the procedures in the Searching Policy Framework, engage in local training/refresher sessions, ask managers for advice, talk with colleagues and share knowledge/practical learning.
- Ensure you know how to access technical aids, use them effectively and test/charge before use.
- Be aware of the common places where items are hidden (e.g. armpits, socks, underwear, waistbands, under breasts, skin folds etc.) so you know where to focus on.

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.



4 principles of Procedural Justice

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

- Engage with the person you are searching, explain the process and why the search is taking place. **NEUTRALITY TRUSTWORTHY MOTIVES**
- Ask the person if they have any questions, answer them and try to put them at ease. Encourage an open discussion. **VOICE NEUTRALITY**
- Ask the person if they are in possession of an unauthorised item. If they hand something over, explain what the next steps will be. Consider if a search is still needed - they might have another item concealed. **VOICE NEUTRALITY TRUSTWORTHY MOTIVES**
- Conduct searches thoroughly and apply all required steps to ensure they are effective. This will act as a deterrent, even if nothing is found, and will help maintain security and safety for everyone living and working in the prison.
- Conduct the search in a professional and sensitive way; people may not be used to this level of contact due to recent reduced regimes. **RESPECT**
- Full searches must be conducted by 2 gender appropriate members of staff and out of sight of others. The person must never be fully naked, and a gown can be offered for decency. **RESPECT**
- Understand religious/cultural sensitivities and adjust searches appropriately e.g. headwear must only be removed in private/sight of same sex staff; care must be taken when using dogs to search Muslim people – washing facilities may be needed and protective clothing provided. **RESPECT**
- Never undertake an intimate search (i.e. a physical intrusion into a body orifice e.g. vagina, anus or mouth). **RESPECT**
- Be careful when rub-down searching and touching the body. Wear gloves to avoid direct contact and protect from sharps injuries. **RESPECT**
- Make use of available technical aids (e.g. hand-held metal detectors) to improve searches and explain how you are going to use these to the person being searched. **TRUSTWORTHY MOTIVES**
- Know and explain what actions you are going to take when you suspect a prisoner is hiding contraband in their body – e.g. an x-ray body scan (for males only), segregation, and/or putting a prisoner on report. **TRUSTWORTHY MOTIVES**
- Ensure you know how to call for assistance if a person is non-compliant and becomes aggressive or violent. Never leave them unsupervised. Understand when and how force can be used to enable a search. Explain all steps to the prisoner. **NEUTRALITY**

AFTER

- Explain what will happen to the person as a result of the search. **TRUSTWORTHY MOTIVES**
- Ensure you know what action to take on a find – e.g. how to handle evidence appropriately, share intelligence and report on IRS etc.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Searching Policy Framework

Issued by

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