

Chief Officers
Via Chiefsnet:

22nd May 2025

Dear Chief Officer Colleagues,

Interim Transgender Search Guidance

Police chiefs have been reviewing the implications of last month's UK Supreme Court judgment in relation to the scope of the Equality Act on sex and gender.

We respect the ruling of the Supreme Court and are working to implement this across policing in a consistent manner. We also want to ensure this can be applied pragmatically across many aspects of our service.

We have put together a national coordination group looking at the impact of the ruling on policing. We are working at pace to deliver interim solutions, while we consider its full implications.

Our immediate focus has been on providing updated guidance for transgender search policies, single sex spaces as well as the protected characteristics data standards.

I am writing to share an update about the draft interim guidance on searches of members of the transgender community, as well as searches carried out by transgender police officers, which the National Police Chiefs' Council will be publishing today (Thursday).

It makes clear that more thorough police searches, such as those which expose intimate body parts, should be carried out by police officers and staff of the same biological sex as the detained person.

The guidance sets out where very limited exceptions can be requested by the transgender community where they ask to be searched by someone of their lived gender. Police will endeavour to accommodate such requests where this is operationally viable.

Our aim is to ensure we are implementing the law in a pragmatic and consistent way that treats people with fairness, dignity and respect.

This guidance is based on legal advice and reflects working practice which already happens every day across policing, where officers and detainees make requests about searches for a multitude of reasons.

The guidance is explicit that any search not conducted in line with biological sex must have the written consent of the detainee, the officer carrying out the search as well as the authorising officer. It has been circulated to every police force in the UK. While forces are operationally independent and make their own decisions about policy, we anticipate the guidance will be adopted by every force in England and Wales.

Searches will always be carried out where it is operationally necessary – this guidance is only intended to apply to how these searches are conducted in the context of members of the transgender community.

This is a complex and sensitive area of policing which will greatly benefit from a clear national position and guidance.

We have moved at pace to develop this interim guidance, as it is important that officers and staff have guidance on how searches should be conducted in light of the Supreme Court judgment.

We are continuing to encourage the Home Office to consider the impact of the Supreme Court decision on legislation and help ensure there is consistency and clarity for policing and our partners.

We understand the depth of feeling there is on these issues, both among transgender communities as well as those who hold gender critical views.

Policing remains committed to serving all members of the public with fairness, dignity and respect.

In the coming weeks the NPCC will be leading an internal community impact assessment to understand the reaction to and impact of the Supreme Court decision across policing.

Chief officers are considering other policies and practices following the Supreme Court decision, such as the provision of toilets and changing rooms.

The College of Policing and NPCC are also reviewing protected characteristics data standards, working alongside the likes of the Office for National Statistics as well as the Office for Statistics Regulation.

Thank you and please reach out to ourselves or the team with any questions.

Yours sincerely



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