



Force Disclosure Unit
Wiltshire Police HQ
London Road
Devizes
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN
Tel 101 ext 62005
www.wiltshire.police.uk
disclosure@wiltshire.pnn.police.uk

XXXXXX – by E Mail

Date: 20th September 2022

Your ref: FOI

Our ref: FOI 2022 / 735

Reply contact name is: Nick Penny

Dear XXXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 17th September 2022 concerning Footwear Evidence.

I am required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to handle all requests in a manner that is blind as to the identity and motives of the requestor. Any information released as a response to a request is regarded as being published and therefore in the public domain without caveat.

Your request for information has now been considered and - having consulted our Policies & Procedures Team - I am now able to respond as follows.

You wrote:

I'd like to request the SOP for footwear evidence for research for my dissertation thesis.

Our response:

Wiltshire Police do not have a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) or a specific policy document dedicated specifically to the handling of footwear from an evidential perspective.

The handling of Footwear Evidence forms part of two of our current procedural documents entitled as follows :-

“Forensic Custody Sampling and Sampling Following Invite Interview Policy”

AND

“Seizure Storage Retention and Disposal of Special Property Policy And Procedure”

The section(s) from these Policies that relate to Footwear Evidence are as detailed in the following 2 pages below :-



4. SHOE PRINTS / FOOTWEAR

4.1 Taking Shoeprints/Footwear impressions in connection with a criminal investigation

Legislation has given Police the power to take and retain Footwear samples:

PACE 61A and SOCA 2005 Section 118 Impressions of footwear

Subsection (2) of this section inserts a new section 61A into PACE. The section will allow the police to take an impression of a person's footwear with or without consent.

Detainees must also be made aware the shoeprints may be subject of a speculative search
An impression may only be taken without consent where a person has been:

- Charged with, or informed they may be prosecuted for, a recordable offence
- Prosecuted for a recordable offence
- Cautioned for a recordable offence or given a warning or reprimand in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 for a recordable offence

Shoeprints can be recovered, with permission, from any suspect.

PACE, section 61A, provides power for a police officer to take footwear impressions without consent from any person over the age of ten years who is detained at a police station.

4.2 Retention of Shoeprints/Footwear

Shoeprints, taken legally for a Recordable Offence, are retained for minimum of six months and a maximum of twelve months.

The value of shoeprints diminishes with age as the wear patterns change with time.

When is a Shoeprints/Footwear Sample Required?

Shoeprints should be recovered from the following:

- Criminal Damage
- Auto Crime
- Drugs
- Burglary
- Robbery
- Serious/Major Crime
- Persons arrested for other crime but with convictions for the above
- PPOs
- PYOs
- Target Criminals

- Repeat Offenders
- Op LIBERAL, rogue traders.

Where possible it is always considered best practice to seize the physical footwear at the time, as for any further forensic comparison the physical item will be needed. If not seized at the time but seized at a late date the comparison could be different due to the fact the value of the shoeprint diminishes with age as the wear pattern will change.

4.3 Recording Shoeprints/Footwear

Shoeprints should be recorded using the Print Kits provided in Custody. These samples are collated within custody and sent onto the Custody Sampling Team in A&S Portishead via Devizes Headquarters on routine courier runs.

4.4 Shoeprints/Footwear Which Should Not be Recorded

Forensic analysis of footwear relies on wear patterns so certain types of shoe will be of little or no use:

- Stiletto shoes
- 'Flip Flops'
- Carpet slippers
- Plain soled shoes.

4.5 Speculative Searches

PACE 61A and SOCA 2005 Section 118 Subsections (3) and (4) make a number of consequential amendments to sections 63A and 64 of PACE to allow footwear impressions to be retained and searched against the National Footwear Reference Collection and speculatively searched against the Mark Intelligence Index.

4.6 Taking footwear impressions at Non-Custody Police Station following invite interview

When taking footwear impressions following invite interviews at Non-Custody Police Stations, the Print Kits are to be used. Once the impressions have been obtained, they will need to be placed into a plastic exhibits bag, sealed and a continuity sheet must be completed and stapled to the front and outside of the bag. Local procedures are then to be followed regarding the Divisional Driver collecting them and the impressions being sent to The Custody Sampling Team at A&S Portishead via Devizes HQ.

And from our "Seizure Storage Retention and Disposal of Special Property Policy And Procedure"

3. Packaging Property

- In respect of footwear paper evidence bags with windows (where practicable) must be used (should photographs be required) Footwear MUST be bagged separately – one item per bag

I am satisfied that all the relevant information has been passed to me and been considered in the light of your request within the time constraints applicable under the legislation.

Wiltshire Police would like to thank you for the interest that you have shown in the Force.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Penny
Disclosure Decision Maker

Wiltshire Police offers a re-examination of your case under its review procedure.



Force Disclosure Unit

Wiltshire Police HQ, London Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2DN
Telephone 101 ext 62005

Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from Wiltshire Police, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.

2. How to Request a Review

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing to the:

Force Disclosure Unit
Wiltshire Police Headquarters,
London Road, Devizes,
Wiltshire,
SN10 2DN

Email at disclosure@wiltshire.pnn.police.uk.

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Force Disclosure Unit within 20 working days of the Force's response to the original FoI request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing to include confirmation of the reasons for the review. The review will be conducted by another Decision Maker, who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Force Disclosure Unit will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to complete the review within twenty working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 working days.

The Independent Decision Maker will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, taking into account the matters raised by the complaint.

4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Decision Maker will reply to the complainant with the result of the review. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the review they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following details:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 700
Fax: 01625 524 510
Email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk