

WILTSHIRE POLICE



XXXX – Via email



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Date: 24th March 2026

Our ref: FOI 2026-230

Dear XXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 24th February regarding handcuffing.

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 I am able to respond as follows.

You wrote (and our response):

Whenever applicable please give answers to this Fol request according to written instructions in the force's official training literature.

1. Under what circumstances are officers trained to use handcuffs on a suspect who is being arrested?

Officers are trained that the application of handcuffs is a use of force and must be justified on the specific facts and circumstances. Decision-making is guided by the principles that any force must be:

Proportionate, Legal, Accountable and Necessary.

Handcuffing on arrest is not automatic. Officers are trained to consider factors such as the risk of escape, risk of violence, and the need to safely carry out lawful procedures, based on their reasonable belief at the time.

2. In answering 1) above do the following play a material part?
 - a. Risk of the suspect absconding/escaping/fleeing
 - b. Posing a danger to themselves or others

Keeping Wiltshire Safe

Yes. Risk of escape/absconding and risk of harm to the person or others are material considerations when deciding whether handcuffs are justified as a use of force.

3. Are there any other criteria apart from those listed in 2) above that apply when answering 1) above?

Other relevant considerations can include the individual's behaviour and demeanour, known information and risk indicators available at the time, the environment, availability of less intrusive options, and the person's welfare (including any apparent vulnerability or medical concern). Any decision must be reasonable, necessary and proportionate in the circumstances.

4. If someone under arrest is sitting or lying on the ground and refuses to stand up and walk to a vehicle is the arresting officer trained that s/he should handcuff the suspect regardless of any criteria covered by 1) above?

No – The refusal to stand up and walk on its own is not enough to justify the use of handcuffs, this would need to be linked to a threat of violence, threat of escape if the officer is to carry out a lawful procedure, fear of violence or fear of escape based on the officer's belief at that moment.

As with all use of force, the decision must be based on the circumstances at the time and be lawful, necessary and proportionate, with the officer able to justify their actions.

5. If a group of officers need to carry a handcuffed suspect to a vehicle does the training specify whether the suspect should have their arms handcuffed behind their back or in front of them?

The force trains officers to apply handcuffs in a manner that is lawful, necessary and proportionate, and to manage any subsequent movement/conveyance of a detained person safely. Officers are trained to handcuff to the rear, however if they decide to handcuff to the front, it will always be based on their own National Decision Model to do so.

6. Please explain the reasoning behind the answer to 5) above.

The rationale for the positioning and management of a restrained person is to reduce the risk of injury to the person, officers and the public, while preventing escape and maintaining control in a safe manner. Officers are trained to make decisions based on the National Decision Model and the circumstances they face.

7. If a group of officers need to carry a suspect who is not handcuffed to a vehicle have they been trained to carry the suspect face up or face down?

Officers are trained to manage situations where a person refuses to walk using the National Decision Model and approved personal safety training. Any physical intervention must be justified, proportionate and necessary, with the person's welfare kept under review. Officers are trained to carry subjects only when

handcuffed. If an Officer decides to carry a subject without handcuffs it will always be based on their own National Decision Model (NDM) to do so. Carrying a subject face up or down will be based on the Officers NDM at that time.

8. Please explain the reasoning behind the answer to 7) above.

The approach is risk-based: officers consider the behaviour presented, the immediate risks, available options and the need to safeguard the individual and others. The method used will depend on the circumstances and the minimum necessary force.

9. If a group of officers need to carry a handcuffed suspect to a vehicle have they been trained to carry the suspect face up or face down?

Both – Officers are trained in approved methods for safely moving a restrained person where this is necessary and justified.

10. Please explain the reasoning behind the answer to 9) above.

Decisions about any physical intervention are made at the time using the National Decision Model and a dynamic risk assessment, taking account of the safety of the person and others. Officers must be able to justify their actions as lawful, necessary and proportionate.

11. Please state by paragraph numbers which responses correspond with written instructions in the force's training literature.

The responses provided are based on the force's personal safety training and national guidance on use of force (including handcuffing and, where applicable, supplementary restraints). This disclosure provides a summary of principles.

Referenced materials (summarised): College of Policing Personal Safety Manual (Handcuffing and supplementary restraints) and national guidance on decision-making and use of force (including the National Decision Model).

12. For responses that do not correspond with any written instructions in the force's training literature does that imply that the arresting officer can do as they please? If not, why not?

The force's training literature is not a stand-alone set of instructions for an officer to follow in any one circumstance or situation. It provides guidance and principles; however, it will always fall to the officer to justify their decision-making and any use of force based on the information available at the time, including threat and risk. Officers are expected to follow the National Decision Model and use the minimum necessary force to achieve a lawful objective:

1. Would the use of force have a lawful objective (for example, the prevention of injury to others or damage to property, or the effecting of a lawful arrest) and, if so, how immediate and grave is the threat posed?

2. Are there any means, short of the use of force, capable of attaining the lawful objective identified?

3. Having regard to the nature and gravity of the threat, and the potential for adverse consequences to arise from the use of force (including the risk of escalation and the exposure of others to harm) what is the minimum level of force required to attain the objective identified, and would the use of that level of force be proportionate or excessive?

I am satisfied that all the relevant information has been passed to me and 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,

Force Disclosure Decision Maker