

# WILTSHIRE POLICE FORCE PROCEDURE



## USE OF POCKET NOTEBOOKS (PNB's) AND OTHER NOTEBOOKs

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## PROCEDURE OVERVIEW

Some members of the Force are provided with an official pocket notebook (PNB) to record evidence and information necessary to enable them to give an accurate account of an occurrence. This procedure seeks to re-enforce the general principles covering the use of the PNBs; which will only be used for official purposes and should always be carried when on duty.

Some officers and staff also use other types of notebooks (such as the Blue Books). The principles stated in this procedure also apply to the use of Blue books and **ANY** other type of notebook used by officers/staff, during the course of their duty, to record information that could identify an individual or may be used in criminal/civil proceedings.

This document details the procedures that must be followed regarding the completion, retention and disposal of official PNBs and other notebooks where personal information has been recorded. This procedure does not apply to notebooks which do not contain personal data.

Terms used in this procedure:

**PNB:** refers the official Pocket Notebook;

**Notebook:** refers to other types of notebook used to record information relating to an identifiable individual (whether supplied by the Force or purchased by the user).

## APPLICABILITY

All police officers and police staff who have been issued, or require, an official Pocket Notebook (PNB) as an integral part of their role or use another type of notebook to record information that could identify an individual or may be used in criminal/civil proceedings.

## RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES and OTHER DOCUMENTS

[Contemporaneous Note Interviews Policy](#)

[Niche RMS Minimum Data Quality Standards](#)

[Records Management Policy](#)

[Records Retention Schedule](#)

[Resignation & Retirement \(Police Officer\) Procedure](#)

[Resignation & Retirement \(Police Staff\) Procedure](#)

## AUTHORISED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

[Information Management](#)

## DATA PROTECTION

Any information relating to an identified or identifiable living individual recorded as a consequence of this procedure will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, General Data Protection Regulations and the [Force Data Protection Policy](#).

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

This document has been assessed as suitable for public release.

## MONITORING and REVIEW

This procedure will be reviewed every three years in the light of PSD feedback, national policy or procedural change or due to changes to law or Force strategy or at such other times as may become necessary.

## WHO TO CONTACT ABOUT THIS PROCEDURE

The Head of Crime Standards and Justice is responsible for this procedure. All queries relating to this procedure should in the first instance be directed to the Force Policy Officer or Crime Standards and Justice Department.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The primary use of PNBs is to record evidence relating to any incident.

All PNB's and notebooks used for police business are for police officers and staff members own use, but remain the property of Wiltshire Police and must be surrendered upon request. PNB's and notebooks may be examined by supervisors at any time or by lawyers or court officials when giving evidence during a court case.

PNB's and notebooks are potentially disclosable as unused material in criminal cases and as a relevant document in civil proceedings.

Traditionally PNB's were used extensively by officers to record the details of every incident attended along with their whereabouts at regular intervals. In light of changes to the way the Force now records and stores data, clear guidance is given below to reduce repetition of information written in PNB's, Blue Books and other types of notebooks and electronic records.

Research has revealed that officers have previously spent many unnecessary hours completing PNB's, duplicating information which already exists in statements of arrests, or in other electronic records held by the Force. By eliminating duplicate information a large amount of time will be recovered to enable effective patrols and timely responses by front line staff.

### 1.1 What will be recorded in PNB's

- Daily entries (**duty start and finish times**) including annual leave, rest days and court appearances
- Refreshment Breaks
- Details of incidents where no other audit trail exists (e.g. not recorded on Storm or Niche)
- PNC checks
- Found/lost property
- Recording first description provided by a witness
- Recording verbatim conversations and significant statements from victims, witnesses or offenders
- PACE compliant contemporaneous note interviews (where interview at police station is not practicable or where printed pro-forma is not available – See [Contemporaneous Note Interviews Policy](#) for more details)
- Drawings (maps, crime scene, property)
- Intelligence material e.g. from daily briefings

Officers should also refer to the [Body Worn Video Procedure](#) for details of what should be recorded in relation to the use of Body Worn Cameras.

### 1.2 What will not be recorded in PNBs

- Information recorded elsewhere, including duplicate information (e.g. Storm, Niche RMS or other electronic forms)
- PNB's will not be used for recording information already written in a statement, including arrest statements
- Final results for an incident where Storm/Niche have been fully updated
- Stops and searches (providing Form 456 completed and issued)

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## 2. PNB and NOTEBOOK RULES

In order to support the reliability and accuracy of entries in the PNB, a number of rules have been established. These are intended to ensure that entries are made at the time of the event they refer to and are not the subject of unauthorised or dishonest alteration. The rules must be followed, the entries and consequentially the evidence that they support should withstand scrutiny.

PNBs will bear a serial number and will be treated as accountable documents with strict attention to their safe custody and issue. In order to support your PNB's integrity you must abide by these rules.

Failure to comply with the rules may lead a Court to question the accuracy of your evidence and your honesty as a witness. This in turn may lead to the exclusion of your evidence and ultimately in the dismissal of the case.

### 2.1 Use of Blue Books and other notebooks

The use of Blue Books and/or other types of notebooks is permitted for all officers/staff not engaged on patrol duties. **Only one current notebook** will be used by an officer/staff member at anytime.

Where Blue Books and/or other types of notebooks are used to record information relating to an identified or identifiable individual, an investigation or Force operation they should be used and stored in line with the rules stated below and, specifically, the rules regarding: Recording Interviews and Verbatim Conversations, Making Joint Notes (including conferring), Accuracy, Safe Keeping and Completed Notebooks.

Information relating to an identified or identifiable individual, an investigation or Force operation recorded in a Blue Book and/or other types of notebook must be copied into the appropriate RMS (NICHE).

All notebooks (non PNB) used to record information that could identify an individual, Force operation or may be used in criminal/civil proceedings should be clearly numbered, dated and referenced, as stated in section 3 below, for accountability and retention purposes by the officer/staff member using that notebook. Each entry made in the notebook should be dated accordingly.

### 2.2 'No ELBOWS' Acronym

The acronym '**No ELBOWS**' is often used to explain some of the initial rules for using a PNB and must be followed. The rules listed within the 'no' category below must not be seen in officers/staff members' PNB's.

<b>No</b>	{	<b>E</b>	<b>Erasures</b>
		<b>L</b>	<b>Leaves torn out</b>
		<b>B</b>	<b>Blank spaces</b>
		<b>O</b>	<b>Overwriting</b>
		<b>W</b>	<b>Writing between lines</b>
		<b>S</b>	<b>Statements <u>must be</u> written in 'Direct Speech'</b>

### 2.3 Additional Rules

- Entries should be made in **BLACK** ink
- All surnames must be in block capitals
- Each entry must include time and location
- Where whole or part pages are accidentally left blank a diagonal line must be drawn across the blank area and 'omitted in error' written across the page

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- If a mistake is made, cross it out with a single line so that the word or words remain legible. Initial the deletion and follow it with the replacement words
  - Entries must be made only on the lines of the pages of the book and all lines and pages should be used
  - Pages must not be removed from the PNB
  - Each officer/staff member will endorse their rank, number, name and the consecutive issue number on the outside front cover of the book
  - Ensure that pocket books are examined and signed by supervisors as stated in section 3.0.

## **2.4 Recording Notes at the Time**

PNB entries should be made at the time of the event which is being recorded. Where circumstances prevent this, events should be recorded as soon as is possible after the event. Where there is a delay, the specific reasons must be included, for example the conduct of the suspect.

- Belated entries – put a symbol (asterisk) at the place in the PNB where you should have written your notes and then on the next available line in your PNB place another symbol to indicate that the two points are related and write any additional notes you should have made. Include ‘refers to page 43’ next to the symbol so you or anyone else looking at it knows where to look for the rest of the details.

The time and date that the entry is subsequently made and the reasons why the entry could not be made at the time must also be recorded.

- If your PNB is not available, use any material to record what you are able to and exhibit this for evidential purposes.

## **2.5 Recording Interviews and Verbatim Conversations**

It is often necessary to record information or a person’s account of an incident immediately regardless of the type of notebook used (PNB, Bluebook etc.). Such entries must be made in direct speech wherever possible for example:

Q: “Can you explain what happened?”

R: “Yes, I was walking along the High Street when...”

It will then be followed by a section of narrative which accurately explains the event.

A note will be made of any comments made by a person suspected of committing an offence whether these comments are in response to your questions or not. The person will be invited to read the note and write an endorsement to the effect that ‘I certify that this is a true and accurate record of the conversation that took place’. This should be signed by the suspect and the officer as the conversation may be construed to be an interview. If the suspect does not consider it to be correct, he or she will be invited to indicate which details are considered to be inaccurate and to sign a record of those details.

If the suspected person refuses to sign the notebook, this must be noted and signed by the officer. The senior officer present must read the note over to the suspect and ask whether they would like to sign it as correct, or indicate the aspect they consider to be inaccurate, then endorse the notebook to describe what has taken place.

## **2.6 Making Joint Notes**

When two or more officers are involved in an investigation or present at an interview, there is no objection to their conferring when subsequently making entries in their respective notebooks but

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such entries must reflect only genuine personal observations and recollections. Officers will then read and sign each other's notebooks to agree that the entry is an accurate reflection.

Where joint notes have been made it is necessary that the officers endorse their own notebook to the effect that this has happened and include the times between when the note writing took place, the location and who was present.

### **2.6.1 Conferring**

In cases where formal Post Incident Procedures (PIP) are taking place, or are likely to take place, officers and staff must not confer before making their accounts (whether initial or subsequent detailed accounts). It is important that key police witnesses individually record what their honestly held belief of the situation was at the time force was used.

There should, therefore, be no need for an officer to confer with others about what was in their mind at the time force was used. If, however, in a particular case a need to confer on other issues does arise, then, in order to ensure transparency and maintain public confidence, where some discussion has taken place, officers must document the fact that this has taken place, highlighting:

- time, date and place where conferring took place
- the issues discussed
- with whom
- the reasons for such discussion.

### **2.7 Daily Entries**

Uniformed Inspectors, Sergeants and Constables and appropriate police staff on operational duties will make daily entries in their PNB. Each day's duty will commence with the day of the week and date and will conclude with a line drawn across the page.

Police officers and appropriate police staff on non-operational duties need not make the above daily entries but will record such notes as may be necessary from time to time.

### **2.8 Accuracy**

Absolute accuracy is essential. All information recorded in a notebook or otherwise must adhere to the principles stated in section 4 of the [Niche RMS Minimum Data Quality Standards](#) and be Accurate, Adequate, Relevant and Timely. A deliberate false entry is a serious disciplinary offence and could prejudice any court proceedings resulting in adverse comments from magistrates or judges.

### **2.9 PNB Record of Issue**

Records will be kept at Headquarters Stores showing the serial numbers of PNB's issued in bulk to the policing hubs (as appropriate). Supervisors should request new PNB's from their relevant Facilities Administrator.

Where stocks of PNB's are kept and monitored by supervisors, the 'Pocket Notebook and HORT 1 Issue Register' (form number 1070) must be completed for every PNB issue. The register will show the date of issue, serial number of the book, signature of officer/staff member receiving and signature of officer issuing.

Once every 'Pocket Notebook and HORT 1 Issue Register' (form number 1070) has been completed, it will be the responsibility of the issuing officer completing the final entry to forward the completed document to their relevant Facilities Administrator. The document will be retained for a period of 6 years from the date of the final entry (see [Records Retention Schedule](#) for details).

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An officer/staff member requesting a new PNB will provide their current book for examination by the supervisor prior to being issued a new one. **Only one current PNB** will be used by an officer/staff member at anytime.

**Under no circumstances** will a new PNB be issued or taken by an individual officer or staff member until the previous book has been produced and shown to be fully completed or likely to be so completed during the next tour of duty. The officer/staff members supervisor must sign and date the expiring PNB to confirm its examination before a new PNB is issued or taken.

At police stations where there is no supervisor on duty and a new PNB is required, the 'Pocket Notebook and HORT 1 Issue Register' must be countersigned by a colleague and must be left for a supervisor to countersign on their return to work.

Retaining a PNB without permission and knowledge of a Supervisor could lead to misconduct proceedings.

Bespoke PNB's (e.g. with green or orange pages to write on) are available for officers who have dyslexia. If a bespoke PNB is required a request should be sent to HQ supplies which will then be sent to the officer's supervisor to issue. The requirements for issuing a PNB stated above will still apply.

## **2.10 Safe Keeping of Notebooks and PNB's**

It is the responsibility of an individual officer/staff member to ensure their current notebook (of whatever type) are kept stored in a safe locked location.

The loss of a PNB, Blue Book/other type of notebook, where information has been recorded that could be used to identify an individual, is a potential breach of the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations.

All such losses must be reported to a supervisor as soon as possible and to the Force Data Protection Officer within 72 hours.

## **2.11 Examination of PNB's by Supervising Officers / Staff**

All supervising officers will examine and initial the PNB of officer/staff members within their department at frequent and irregular intervals and manage any identified discrepancies.

A key function of supervisors is to maximise operational time for officers/staff members. The reduction of duplication and the adherence to this procedure through effective supervision, will ensure maximum efficiency and increased visibility is delivered.

Supervising officers will check;

- For any discrepancies
- PNBs are fully up-to-date and accurate
- To ensure Force procedure is being applied and that unnecessary PNB records are not being recorded

It is considered good practice for supervisors to note on the first page of a new issued PNB the date of the issue and the serial number of the officer's previous PNB with the supervisors' signature. The old PNB should also be annotated on the last page by the supervisor with signature, date and serial number of the new PNB being issued. This assures continuity.

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### 3. COMPLETED NOTEBOOKS and PNB's

Any material of interest to an investigation held within a notebook or PNB **MUST** be copied and kept within an appropriate RMS (NICHE).

Completed notebooks/PNB's **MUST** be returned to Old Sarum Stores to be retained in accordance with Force Records Retention Schedule. All notebooks (other than PNBs) must be referenced, inside of the front cover, as below before they can be stored:

- Name
- Rank
- Shoulder Number
- date book started
- date book completed
- Name of any named Operations where notes are recorded within.

Failure to comply with this instruction in detail will mean that the book concerned will be returned to the author or if not identified will be destroyed.

Only notebooks (Blue Book/other type of notebook) which either do not contain any personal data or information relevant to policing business, or where all such information has been copied into the appropriate RMS (NICHE), can be shredded and disposed of by the officer/staff member as confidential waste.

All notebooks held at time of resignation, transfer or retirement **MUST** be returned to Old Sarum Stores to be retained in accordance with the [Force Records Retention Schedule](#).

## DOCUMENT ADMINISTRATION

### Ownership:

Department Responsible: Crime Standards and Justice  
Procedure Owner/Author: Supt Dave MINTY / Andrew IRVING (Policy Officer)  
Technical Author: Insp. Mark THOMPSON  
Senior Officer/Manager Sponsor: ACC Crime Justice and Vulnerability

### Revision History:

Revision Date	Version	Summary of Changes
04.03.2019	2.8	Information to be referenced in blue books prior to return to Old Sarum stores added to Ss2.1 & 3.0
29.03.2019	3.0	Draft v2.8 published as substantive version 3.0
10.01.2020	4.0	Reference to Data Quality Standards changed to Niche RMS Minimum Data Quality Standards. Reference to Retention Protocol (IICSA) and embargo on disposal removed. Reference to the 4 principles of data quality added: Accurate, Adequate, Relevant and Timely.

### Approvals:

This document requires the following approvals:

Name & Title	Date of Approval	Version
Continuous Improvement Team	13.03.2019	2.8
JNCC	13.03.2019	2.8

### Distribution:

This document has been distributed via:

Name & Title	Date of Issue	Version
E-Brief	07.03.2019	3.0
Email to relevant affected Staff/Officers		
Other: <i>(state method here)</i>		

### Diversity Impact Assessment:

Has a DIA been completed? If no, please indicate the date by which it will be completed. If yes, please send a copy of the DIA with the procedure.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <b>Date:</b>
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### Consultation:

List below who you have consulted with on this procedure (incl. committees, groups, etc):

Name & Title	Date Consulted	Version

### Implications of the Procedure:

#### Training Requirements

Current training is conducted by People Development. No new training requirements required.

#### IT Infrastructure

No new infrastructure required.