

# WILTSHIRE POLICE FORCE PROCEDURE



## POCKET NOTEBOOKS

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## PROCEDURE

### PROCEDURE OVERVIEW

Some members of the Force are provided with an official pocket notebook to record evidence and information necessary to enable them to give an accurate account of an occurrence.

This document details the procedures that must be followed regarding the completion, retention and disposal of pocket notebooks.

Pocket notebooks will only be used for official purposes and should always be carried when on duty.

### APPLICABILITY

All police officers and appropriate police staff who have been issued, or require, an official Pocket Notebook as an integral part of their role.

### RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES and OTHER DOCUMENTS

[Body Worn Video Procedure](#)

[Contemporaneous Note Interviews Policy](#)

[Seizure, Storage, Retention and Disposal of Special Property Policy and Procedure](#)

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

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

### AUTHORISED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

There are no associated Authorised Professional Practice areas at present.

### 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 Professional Standards Department.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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

A PNB is for police officers and appropriate police staff members own use, but is the property of Wiltshire Police and must be surrendered upon request. PNB's may be examined by supervisors at any time or by lawyers or court officials when giving evidence during a court case. PNB's 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 and other 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 written in PNB's, 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. POCKET NOTE BOOK 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.

Pocket Books 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 Pocket Book'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 '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>

### 2.2 Additional Rules

- Entries must 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
- 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 s3.0

### 2.3 Recording Notes at the Time

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

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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.

## **2.4 Recording Interviews and Verbatim Conversations**

It is often necessary to record information or a person's account of an incident immediately into the notebook. 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 PNB, 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 pocket notebook to describe what has taken place.

## **2.5 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 such entries must reflect only genuine personal observations and recollections. Officers will then read and sign each other's pocket 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 pocket notebooks to the effect that this has happened and include the times between when the note writing took place, the location and who was present.

### **2.5.1 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.

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## 2.6 Daily Entries

Uniformed Inspectors, Sergeants and Constables and appropriate police staff on operational duties will make daily entries. 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.

## 2.7 Accuracy

Absolute accuracy is essential. A deliberate false entry is a serious disciplinary offence and could prejudice any court proceedings resulting in adverse comments from magistrates or judges.

## 2.8 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.

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 Pocket Notebook 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.

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## **2.9 Safe Keeping of Notebooks**

It is the responsibility of an individual officer/staff member to ensure their completed and current PNB's are kept stored in a safe locked location, e.g. in a locker at the officer/staff member's place of work.

In the event of an officer/staff member losing a PNB, it is essential that a supervisor is notified as soon as is practicable.

## **2.10 Completed Notebooks**

When a notebook has been completed, it will be carefully retained for 6 years by the officer/staff member to whom it was issued and then shredded and disposed of them as confidential waste.

Notebooks held at time of resignation, transfer or retirement will be returned to Headquarters Stores and will be retained there for 6 years before being destroyed.

## **3. EXAMINATION OF PNBS 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.