KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.

A GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UK

KNOCKOUT VIOLENCE

PROJECT

Contents

About This guide 2

Why this guide is important 3

Scenario 1 4

Scenario 2 5

Scenario 3 6

The Rights of Under 18s 7

Advice 12

About This Booklet

This booklet has been created to help young people understand their legal rights when dealing with the police in the UK. Many young people don't know what the law says about stop and search, being questioned, or what to do if they are arrested. This guide will break down the most important rights in simple, easy-to-understand language so that you can feel more confident and informed in any situation.

What's Inside?

🔹 Stop & Search – What the police can and can't do, when they are allowed to search you, and what you should ask them.

🔹 Stop & Account – What to do if an officer stops you and starts asking questions, and when you have the right to walk away.

🔹 Arrest Rights – What happens when you are arrested, what you should and shouldn't say, and how to get legal support.

🔹 Your Rights at the Police Station – What you are entitled to, including free legal advice, an appropriate adult, and how long you can be held.

🔹 Dispersal Orders & Police Powers – When the police can tell you to leave an area and what to do if they issue you an order.

🔹 Youth Court & Criminal Charges – What happens if you are charged with a crime, how youth court works, and what protections you have.

🔹 Key Phrases to Use – A list of important things to say to police officers in different situations to make sure your rights are respected.

Why This Guide Is Important

Many young people in the UK don't fully understand their rights, which can lead to confusion, fear, and sometimes unfair treatment. Knowing what the police are allowed to do—and what they are not—helps you:

✔️ Stay calm and confident in interactions with the police.
✔️ Avoid giving away information unnecessarily.
✔️ Ensure fair treatment by officers.
✔️ Challenge unlawful behaviour if your rights are violated.
✔️ Protect yourself and others by sharing this knowledge.

This booklet is not about encouraging people to resist the police—it's about making sure that young people are treated fairly and know how to handle situations safely and legally.

By understanding your rights, you are less likely to be taken advantage of and more likely to make the right choices if you are stopped, searched, or arrested.

How to Use This Booklet

📖 Read it through carefully so you understand your rights.
📌 Keep it with you or take photos of key pages on your phone.
💬 Share it with friends so they know their rights too.
📢 Speak up if something feels wrong—ask for help if needed.

Knowledge is power—make sure you're informed!

Scenario 1: Stop & Search

Situation: You and your friends are hanging out in town when police officers approach and say they are going to conduct a stop and search.

Script:

Police: "We are stopping and searching you under Section 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. Do you have anything on you that you shouldn't?"

Young Person: "Am I being detained?"

Police: "No, this is a stop and search. You are required to comply."

Young Person: "Can you tell me your name, the station you are from, and the legal reason for the search?"

(Police provides details.)

Young Person: "Okay, I understand. I will cooperate, but I'd like to ensure my rights are being respected. Can you confirm that I am not required to give my name and address unless I'm being arrested?"

(The officer confirms.)

Young Person: "Alright. I will stay calm and comply, but I would like a record of this search afterward."

(The search takes place, and the officer provides a written record.)

Scenario 2: Being stopped for questioning

Situation: You're walking home alone when a police officer stops you and asks where you're going and what you're doing.

Script:

Police: "Excuse me, can I have a word? Where are you headed?"

Young Person: "Good evening, officer. Am I being detained, or am I free to go?"

Police: "You're not being detained, we're just asking a few questions."

Young Person: "I appreciate that, but if I'm not being detained, I'd prefer to continue on my way. Is that okay?"

(If the officer insists on questioning you further, stay polite but firm.)

Young Person: "I know I have the right to remain silent unless I am under arrest. If I'm not under arrest, I'd like to leave now."

(If the officer allows you to leave, walk away calmly. If they insist on further questioning, ask if you are being arrested and on what grounds.)

Scenario 3: Being approached in a group

Situation: You and your friends are in a park when police officers approach and ask if you have been involved in any antisocial behaviour.

Script:

Police: "We've had reports of a group of young people causing a disturbance. What have you all been up to?"

Young Person: "We're just hanging out and haven't been causing any trouble. Is there a reason you're stopping us?"

Police: "We just need to check that everything is okay."

Young Person: "That's fine. But just to clarify, are we being accused of something or are we free to go?"

(If the officer asks for names and addresses, remember you don't have to provide them unless you are suspected of a crime.)

Young Person: "I understand, but unless we're being arrested or required to under dispersal powers, I'd rather not give my details."

(If the police ask the group to leave the area under dispersal powers, they must explain why. If given a dispersal order, ask for written proof.)

Rights of Under-18s When Dealing with Police in the UK

1. **Stop and Search Rights**

Police can only stop and search you if they have reasonable grounds to suspect you are carrying:

•Weapons

•Drugs

•Stolen property

•Something that could be used to commit a crime

You do not have to give your name or address unless you are being arrested.

You can ask the officer for their name, badge number, station, and the legal reason for the search.

You have the right to a written record of the search.

If you are under 18, a responsible adult should be informed if you are taken into custody.

Rights of Under-18s When Dealing with Police in the UK

2. **Being Stopped for Questioning**

You do not have to answer police questions unless you are under arrest.

You can ask if you are free to leave. If the officer says yes, you can walk away.

If you are suspected of anti-social behaviour, police can ask for your name and address, but you don’t have to give it unless they say it's a legal requirement.

3**. Stop and Account**

If an officer asks you what you are doing, where you’re going, or why you are there, this is not a stop and search.

You do not have to answer or give your details.

You can politely ask if you are free to go.

Rights of Under-18s When Dealing with Police in the UK

4. **Arrest Rights**

Police can only arrest you if they have reasonable suspicion that you have committed a crime.

They must explain:

•That you are being arrested

•Why you are being arrested

•The crime they suspect you of

•That you have the right to remain silent

If arrested, you must be taken to a police station as soon as possible.

5. **At the Police Station**

You have the right to free legal advice (a solicitor).

You have the right to a responsible adult (appropriate adult) present, such as a parent, carer, or social worker.

Police must contact your parents or guardians as soon as possible.

You can only be held for 24 hours before being charged or released (longer for serious offences).

Rights of Under-18s When Dealing with Police in the UK

6**. If Given a Dispersal Order**

Police can order you to leave an area if they believe you are causing trouble or may cause trouble.

They must explain why they are giving you a dispersal order.

They cannot use force to move you unless you refuse to comply.

If under 16, they can take you home.

7. **If Taken to the Police Station Without Arrest**

If the police take you to a station without arresting you, they must have a legal reason.

You still have the right to an appropriate adult and legal advice.

They cannot force you to be interviewed without an appropriate adult present.

Rights of Under-18s When Dealing with Police in the UK

8. **If Charged with a Crime**

If under 18, your case will go to the Youth Court, not an adult court.

You can’t be named publicly in most cases.

If you don’t have a lawyer, the court will provide one.

Key Phrases to Remember

"Am I being detained, or am I free to go?"

"Why am I being searched? What law are you using?"

"I would like a solicitor before answering any questions."

"I want an appropriate adult present."

Advice

Stay calm and polite. Avoid escalating the situation.

Know your rights. In most cases, you don’t have to provide your name unless under arrest or a dispersal order.

Ask for the reason. Always request the legal grounds for any police action.

Request a record. If searched or given an order, ask for a written record.

Avoid arguing. If you feel you were unfairly treated, report it later rather than resisting in the moment.