Key Advice when Going on a Protest

If you're heading out on a protest, take a read of our key messages and download a copy of our latest bustcard.

We suggest that you take a note of our protest support phone number and of a criminal solicitor with protest experience. Write them down on something the police will struggle to take from you, such as an arm or a leg.

> **Protest Support Line: 07946 541 511**
>
> **Find a Solicitor with protest experience**

Key Messages

- No Comment
- No Personal Details
- Under What Power?
- No Duty Solicitor
- No Caution

No Comment

You do not need to answer police questions, so don't.

This is for your own protection and for the protection of others.

The police will try to pressure and deceive you into incriminating yourself. Instead of trying to decide when it seems 'safe' to answer, just say "No comment" to all questions – during 'informal chats', in the police van and especially in interview.

If your friend in the next cell knows you aren't going to talk, they will feel better able not to talk themselves. Remember, interviews only help the police – they will not interview you if they already have enough evidence to charge you.

A good solicitor will sometimes suggest that you make a prepared statement in interview. In that case, you or your solicitor will read the statement and you should answer "No comment" to any more questions.

For a longer discussion, the booklet "NO COMMENT" produced by the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group is excellent (note that the booklet is fairly old and we cannot guarantee that all the content is up-to-date and that LDMG is no longer active, it's functions are now carried out by ACAB)

? Key Messages ?

No Personal Details

You do not have to give personal details under ANY stop and search power, so don't.

On protests, the police often use searches as a way of finding out who is present, both for intelligence purposes and to intimidate you.

Police also use arrest as a means of gathering information, particularly when they arrest a large number of people together ("mass arrest").

As a default, you do NOT have to give your personal details to the police at any point during the arrest process.

We recommend not giving personal details to the police for as long as possible – for more information on why, see the page "Do I have to give my details?". If you have been arrested and taken to the police station you may wish to give your name, address and date of birth at the custody desk to speed your release. Police will usually check the address and may visit at a later date.

Once you reach court, you can be required to give your name, address, date of birth and nationality.

There are a few situations in which police may have a power to require personal details: if someone is driving a vehicle (or another licensed activity); if they are being fined under a Fixed Penalty Notice; under a particular anti-social behaviour power (which should not generally be used against protesters); or if there is a particular by-law (for example, in a port or airport).

? Key Messages ?

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Under What Power?

Ask “What power?” to challenge the police to act lawfully

Some police officers rely on you not knowing the law. If you are asked to do something by a police officer, ask them what power (i.e. what law) they are using and why they are using it. Make a note of what was said, by whom (numbers) as soon as possible afterwards.

Don’t let them turn this into a situation where they ask you questions though – just walk away once you have your answer, and remember No Comment!

? Key Messages ?

No Duty Solicitor

Use a recommended solicitor with protest experience

The “duty solicitor” is the solicitor who is present at the police station. They may come from any firm of solicitors, which means they almost certainly know nothing about protest.

Duty solicitors often give bad advice to protesters; we recommend you always use a good solicitor who knows about protest.

? Key Messages ?

No Caution

Cautions are an admission of guilt

Offering you a caution is a way the police may ask you to admit guilt for an offence without having to charge you. It is an easy win for the police, as they don’t have to provide any evidence or convince a court of your guilt.

At the very least, you should never accept a caution without taking advice from a good solicitor.

? Key Messages ?