2. Should I Notify the Police?

We advise against talking to the police ahead of demonstrations whenever possible. Your legal obligation to do so depends on the type of demonstration.

If you inform the police of your upcoming demonstration, you may risk a greater police presence at your action, and you give the police more of a chance to impose conditions on your assembly under section 12/14 – e.g. demanding that you change route or asking you to provide stewards.

Talking to the police ahead of an action also risks you being singled out as an 'organiser' and provides them with an easy way to get your details, and potentially those of other people involved. Occasionally, the police initiate contact with people they believe to be organisers, ahead of demonstrations. If this happens, we advise you answer "No Comment" to all questions, and please inform us of the use of this tactic.

Static demonstration

You have no legal obligation to notify the police of a 'public assembly' and we strongly advise against doing so.

If your protest is staying in one place – e.g. a static demonstration at a set location, a die-in, or a vigil – then you have no legal duty to notify the police.

March

There is a legal obligation to notify police of a planned march, although people often choose not to do so.

Communicating with the police ahead of an action can be problematic, as discussed above. However, the law states that if you organise a march or procession you must give the police 6 clear days notice in writing. This applies if the march/procession is: intended to show support for or opposition to the views or actions of any group; publicise a cause or campaign; mark or commemorate an event. The law does not state a minimum number of participants – even 2 or 3 people could be counted as a march.

The law relates specifically to the organiser of the protest – individual participants do not have to check whether the police have been notified.

> **In practice, it has proved very difficult for the police to prove who has organised a march – unless it is obvious from names on Facebook events or emails. If a march is organised non-hierarchically, it is unclear legally who (if anyone) is obliged to notify the police.**

Advance notice does not need to be given where it is not reasonably practical to do so, if for example it is spontaneous or very short notice.

Many people choose not to notify the police of their planned march. We are aware of only two attempts to bring such a case in the last 16 years, both of which were dropped. Regardless of whether or not you have notified the police of the march, the march itself remains legal and protected by articles 10 and 11 of the Human Rights Act.

If you are trying to decide whether or not to talk to the police ahead of an action – give us a ring.