6. Cautions

You do not have to accept a caution!

A caution is a possible outcome of an arrest, which you may be offered instead of being charged. The police make cautions sound less serious, but they are an admission of guilt, and will still go on your record.

Accepting a caution can seem appealing because it means you will not go to court for that offence. It's phrased like it's a slap on the wrist, and can seem like an easy way out. However, a caution is an admission of guilt and can still affect you in the future: it stays on your record for 5 years and can affect visas, travel, and job applications.

Often the police offer cautions in 'Public Order' cases when the evidence they have is weak. It's an easy result for them; an admission of guilt without having to present evidence against you.

We strongly recommend that you do not accept a caution except in very rare circumstances where you have been advised to by a solicitor with experience of protest law. If you are advised to accept a caution, make sure you are clear why your case is an exception to the rule. Do not follow advice from a duty solicitor to accept a caution.

If you have accepted a caution already then it might be possible to appeal it, especially if you did so without legal advice. Get in touch with a good solicitor who can advise you.

> **Don't get confused! In your interview at a police station the police will begin by reading you a warning:**
>
> ***"You do not have to say anything. But it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence."***
>
> **This is normal and has to happen before an interview. It is sometimes referred to as a 'caution', but it is NOT the same as the formal caution discussed above.**