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There is a set procedure that the police must follow when searching people. We can't guarantee that it will be followed – in fact more often than not we hear from people that officers have appeared to carry out an unlawful stop and search.

The most effective way to hold police officers to account for their actions is by understanding the law that they are using against you.

Police officers must specify before the search who they are and where they are from, what they are looking for, why they suspect you, and search only in places that they might find the items.

You do not have to be actively compliant, and do not need to answer their questions. You may wish to record the search using the [Y-STOP app](#).

If during a search the police find an item that they aren't looking for, such as a controlled substance (drugs) then they can effectively continue based on the reasonable suspicion that you now are carrying these items.

If you're in a public space, then the officer can only ask you to remove your outer clothing such as a hat and coat, ask you to empty your pockets, and give you a pat down.

You can be taken into a private area where the search can be continued with the removal of more items of clothing such as jumpers, hoodies and shoes.

A police van is considered a private space.