

# Moving and transporting detainees

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This section provides information on moving detainees between:

- the scene of an incident/arrest and a police custody suite
- police custody and other custody facilities, secure facilities or hospital out and away from custody

It also provides information on vehicle selection and fleet management.

## Supervision and escort

Only police officers and escort officers designated under [section 38](#) (police staff) or [section 39](#) (contract staff) of the Police Reform Act 2002 may escort detainees in transit.

When a custody officer transfers custody of a detainee to any of the above personnel, the duty to ensure that the detainee continues to be treated in accordance with PACE and the PACE codes of practice is also transferred to that person.

For further information see [section 39\(2\) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(PACE\)](#) and [section 39](#) and [Schedule 4, Part 4 of the Police Reform Act 2002](#).

## Designated escort officers

Chief officers must be satisfied that all escort officers are suitable, trained and competent to carry out the powers and duties which are conferred on them by their designation.

Officers performing transport and escort duty must be suitably trained in first aid.

For information on the search powers of designated escort officers, see [search on arrest](#).

## Prisoner escort and custody services

Prisoner escort and custody services (PECS) is part of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and was established in accordance with arrangements made under the [Criminal Justice Act 1991](#). PECS is responsible for managing contracts awarded to the private sector for escorting prisoners to and from designated courts and police stations after charge, and from prisons to court. It also deals with the transfer of prisoners between prison establishments.

If the contractors are unable to provide this service (in respect of persons refused bail after charge for court) the responsibility rests with the police to ensure that the detainee is transported to court. See [section 46](#) of PACE. Forces must have contingency plans to deal with this situation.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 has amended sections 80 and 82 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to enable specially authorised prisoner custody officers (commonly known as PECS officers) to have custody over prisoners in police stations for purposes connected with certain hearings taking place by way of live link, including Video Remand Hearing (VRH). See [Criminal Justice Act 1991](#).

## Safe movement of detainees

Officers responsible for any movement of a detainee should be fully briefed on any heightened risk or increased vulnerabilities that have been identified for that detainee prior to departure. There must be constant supervision and monitoring if officers and staff have any concerns relating to the detainee's physical or mental health, including where the detainee:

- is drunk and incapable
- is believed or known to have swallowed or packed drugs
- is violent or known to be violent
- is believed or known to be at risk of suicide or self-harm
- has increased susceptibility to positional asphyxia

An ambulance must be called for any detainee who appears to be unconscious or requires urgent medical assessment.

For further information, see [ACPO/Department of Health \(2011\) Template Protocol for the Management of Detainees Who Require Hospital Treatment](#).

## Checklist: risk assessment for restraint and escort

A risk assessment determines the level of restraint and number of escorts required to convey the detainee. It should include:

- established actions of the person prior to police intervention
- actions after contact with police, particularly their level of violence/Police National Computer warning markers
- local intelligence
- allegations by others about the detainee
- information from friends and family
- condition of the detainee
- history of violence, in addition to the above sources
- extent and result of search of the detainee
- detainee's use of weapons on this or previous occasions
- assessment of escape risk
- length of journey
- vehicles available
- physical disability

This list is not exhaustive and officers should consider all relevant factors so that the most appropriate control measures can be adopted.

## Transfer of high-risk detainees

Special arrangements may be necessary for high-risk detainees. Officers should seek advice in cases where an identified risk requires special security measures. Use of armed officers to support movement must be carried out in accordance with [APP on armed policing](#).

## Medical emergencies during transport

See also [detainee care, medical emergencies](#) and [Mental health – detention – Transfer and supervision](#).

In exceptional circumstances, such as a known or anticipated long delay in the arrival of the ambulance, it may be appropriate to use a police vehicle to take the detainee to hospital. If the

detainee requires first aid, it should be given by suitably qualified staff. Forces should only consider using a police vehicle in such circumstances where a risk assessment indicates that it is the most appropriate course of action. This should be recorded on the custody record and include consideration of the vehicle to be used and the staffing arrangements.

Where a police vehicle is used to transport a detained person to hospital on behalf of or in the absence of NHS professionals, the force should conduct a full review of the circumstances.

The [NHS Ambulance Service Protocol](#) requires ambulance services across the country to transport all Mental Health Act section 136 detainees unless the individual is so violent that it is unsafe to do so. Where this is the case, the ambulance should accompany the police vehicle with a member of ambulance staff travelling in the police vehicle.

## Transfer of the PER/dPER form

Custody staff must complete a person escort record (PER) form and ensure the form accompanies a detainee who is being transferred from a custody suite. This includes transfer to:

- court
- hospital
- any other police station (in any force area)
- prison
- PECS contractor (dPER to be used on electronic booking system)
- military police
- UK Immigration and Visas or agent
- Border Force or agent

The PER/dPER form must be signed by the custody officer responsible for transferring the detainee. When using other means of transport, including aircraft, trains, boats or other public transport, control measures must be sufficient to protect the public from harm, ensure the safety of the detainee and comply with individual carriers' own requirements.

## Control measures for detainees in transit

Every detainee must be properly supervised and monitored at all times during transport. Officers and staff should take particular care with individuals who have been subject to force upon arrest,

particularly where they are restrained with handcuffs or leg restraints, as this can increase the risk of injury.

The following principles should be followed when transporting detainees.

- An officer must observe and monitor the detainee and react to any situation that may arise.
- Officers who are working alone must not transport detainees on their own unless they are completely satisfied that they can do so safely – if they are in any doubt they must obtain additional support.
- An escorting officer may be responsible for more than one detainee – where appropriate, the escorting officer should accompany the detainee in the rear of the vehicle, or in the cage, and must be able to communicate with the driver at all times.
- No more than one detainee must be conveyed in an unmodified police car – in these circumstances, the detainee must be accompanied in the rear of the vehicle, in the seat furthest from the driver.
- Modified vehicles must carry no more persons than they are designed for. High-risk detainees require more resources to monitor them.
- Detainees who have struggled violently should not be placed in a vehicle unrestrained or unsupervised – to ensure appropriate control during a journey, the detainee should be seated upright where possible.

## Seat belts

The requirement to wear a seat belt does not apply where a vehicle is being used for police purposes or for carrying a person in lawful custody. See [Regulation 6\(1\)\(f\) of the Motor Vehicles \(Wearing of Seat Belts\) Regulations 1993](#).

Wearing seat belts is, however, encouraged and should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

## Cages and containment

Officers should use a cage or containment facility if the vehicle has one. When a cage designed for more than one detainee is already occupied, officers must consider whether placing a second detainee in the cage would present an increased risk. Detainees who are or have been violent and are assessed as presenting a continuing risk, and those experiencing mental health issues, must not be placed in a cage or containment area with another detainee.

A detainee must never be handcuffed to a vehicle or restrained to it in any way. Officers must exercise extreme caution where a detainee who is already restrained by handcuffs and/or other limb restraints is considered to require additional restraint. Owing to the risks of positional asphyxia, the prone position should not be used during transport. If it is unavoidable, officers must constantly monitor the detainee.

If a detainee becomes violent, staff should, where practicable, stop the vehicle, regain control and only then resume the journey. It may be necessary to call for assistance and to change to a more suitable vehicle.

For further information, see the national [Personal Safety Manual](#) (available via College Learn to registered users).

## Fleet management

Forces should establish policies and procedures for assessing the sufficiency and suitability of vehicles used for transporting detainees. The assessment criteria should include:

- reviewing the incidence of harm to detainees and escorting officers during transit, to identify the level of risk
- analysing the pattern of incidents of harm or successful interventions (see also [Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013](#))
- ensuring that the vehicle fleet is adequate to transport detainees in a safe manner
- anticipating journey lengths and times
- checking the availability of cells
- meeting the requirement to segregate detainees from escorting officers and other detainees
- checking that officers can monitor detainees continuously
- checking that officers can intervene in an emergency situation during transit, for example a fire
- checking the suitability of the cage or containment area
- ensuring that the cage or containment area is the correct size for intended occupancy
- ensuring that there is ligature point protection, such as a sliding internal door instead of standard hinged opening, and materials used are appropriate, such as clear plastic sheeting rather than grille style
- checking access for the detainee and escorting officers

- ensuring there is protection for the detainee and escort officer(s) in the event of a collision or other incident

NOMS has adopted its own vehicle design specification for custody vans.

## Vehicle selection

Any vehicle used for the transportation of detainees should be designed, purchased and converted in line with any currently available national vehicle standardisation specifications.

The type of vehicle used for transport varies between forces and is influenced by availability, the risks associated with the detainee and whether transport is planned or spontaneous.

Depending on the risks identified and the available resources, it may be appropriate to request a different type of transport. The advantages of removing the detainee from the scene as quickly as possible may, however, outweigh the benefits of waiting for a more suitable vehicle. For pre-planned operations, officers should select the most appropriate type of vehicle at the outset.

Other considerations are as follows.

- Officers should make arrangements to keep children and young persons and adult detainees separate wherever possible.
- Detainees can travel for a maximum of two-and-a-half hours before they must be offered a comfort break, although this may be reduced accordingly to meet individual needs.
- All police vehicles used to convey detainees must be equipped with a first-aid kit.

## Inspection of vehicles

Drivers should check their vehicles before and after use. Staff should carry out detailed inspections weekly as part of the normal maintenance regime and record findings.

## Tags

Detention and custody