



# **Searching of Persons, their Property and Environments Policy (formerly Personal Search Policy)**

Easy read version

## What is this policy?



Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust has a duty to provide **a safe environment** for patients and staff.



There may be times when we need to **search people**. This includes visitors, patients, and their property.



This policy is a guide to **when a search would need to be done**, and how it is done.



It also has what **rules** staff must follow when searching someone or their things. It includes what patients and visitors should expect to happen **before, during, and after a search**.



This policy is about searching of **someone's body**, for example patting down their clothes. It may also include your **belongings, room, and shared spaces**. The reason **why** will always be explained to you.



***This policy does not include intimate or internal body searches.***

## Why do we have this policy?



We want the people involved in a search to know **exactly what to expect**. They know what the rules are and what paperwork needs to be done before and after.



This includes **patients, staff, and visitors**.



The reason we do searches is to lower the risk of **dangerous or banned** items entering the ward.



We do this to keep everyone who comes to the ward **safe** and keep risk of harm low.



We want everyone to know why we do **searches**. Also why we sometimes have to do searches people **don't want**.



We also want everyone to know people and their things will be **treated with respect**. We will **never** use a search as a punishment.

## Types of searches

### Personal search



This is when someone searches you by **patting down your body**. This is to feel if you have anything that you shouldn't, for example in your pocket.



This will be done while you are **fully clothed** by one member of staff while another member of staff is watching.



Usually, this search will be carried out by someone of the **same gender** as who is being searched.



If the person being searched has a different gender identity, it will be **their choice** who they want to search them.



Extra care will be taken when searching people who wear **special clothing** or head coverings for **religious reasons**.

## Environmental



This is when we search places like your **room**. It can also be things you have with you, like in your bag.



We understand that having your **private things** looked through can be **upsetting**.



We want to make this feel less upsetting by having you there **wherever possible**. If this cannot happen then you will have the **reasons explained**, and it will be put on record.



Before we do a search we will ask you if you have anything **breakable**, or anything that is **special to you**.



Anything related to your **religion** will be treated with respect and care. Where possible, we will ask you to hold these items and show us them **yourself**.



Anything you have told us is a **comfort or special item** to you will also be treated with respect and care.



**Two members of trained search staff** must be present at the search. At least one member of staff must be the same gender as the person being searched.



We prefer to search people's **property before searching their body**. We only do unplanned body searches when it's considered **very necessary**. We will always talk to you about why this is.

## Other searches



Sometimes both an environmental and personal search will happen. Staff will follow all the rules for both types of searches.



There might be searches of **communal areas** on the ward. This means spaces that everyone uses such as **day rooms or corridors**.



If we need to search these areas regularly, there will be **clear rules** of what to expect given to everyone on the ward.



Sometimes we may need to search around the ward or **surrounding areas**.





This is only when we think that things people aren't meant to have are being **stored somewhere outside the ward** that they can still get to.



Sometimes we ask the **police** to support us and to bring **drug sniffer dogs** to the ward. This is only done when staff are very worried that there are **drugs or other dangerous substances** on the wards or grounds.



Sometimes there might be a policy for searches to happen when people **leave or enter the ward**.



If a ward does this, we will make sure everyone knows. **Including staff, patients, and visitors.**



This policy is currently in place at sites **Forest Lodge Low Secure Unit** and **Endcliffe PICU**.



## Routine search procedures



Sometimes there might be a ward policy for different searches to happen at different times. These are called **routine search procedures**.



These are done to check no one has anything unsafe on them before going certain places or doing certain things. These are known **as pro-active searches**.



These policies are to keep everyone **safe** coming in and out of the ward.



When people leave or enter the ward, we may do a **routine personal search**. This is when your body is scanned with a handheld metal detector and a stand up metal scanner.



This search policy is currently in place at sites **Forest Lodge Low Secure Unit** and **Endcliffe PICU**. It may also be used on other wards if there is a worry you **have something you shouldn't**.



If you are ever going into **seclusion**, which means going into a secure room on your own, you will be **searched beforehand**.



Sometimes people come to us after being **seen by the police**. The police may have done a search already. **The police will tell the ward staff** about this when you come in.



Sometimes staff will do a **pro-active search** of places on the ward.



This is different to when they search people's rooms or are looking for something specific. It is a scan of areas everyone goes to like **day rooms or toilets**.



This type of search does **not include** personal searches of patients or their personal things.



**All of the routine searches** must be written down after they are completed so there is a **record** of what has happened.

## Why you might be searched.



Outside of routine searches, we **only search** people when we think they have something they shouldn't.



This could be anything from things that are **illegal**, or something that could **hurt yourself or others**.



Before a search staff may have been told that **you have something you shouldn't**. Or someone may have noticed you **acting differently** than usual.



For example, if someone is known to have self-harmed in the past, staff will be looking out for signs of your **mood changing quickly**. They may search you for anything you could hurt yourself with, **for your own safety**.



If we search someone based on one of those reasons, it is called a **reactive search**.



This can be a search of **someone, their property, or where they sleep**.



Like other searches, these **need to be recorded**. As there is always reason for this type of search, results will be on **your patient record**.



Staff should not carry out searches that put **themselves or others at risk**.



It is illegal to be in a public place, like the ward, while having a **weapon** or something that could be used as one. If staff find or something or think someone has a weapon, **the police will be involved**.



All rules also apply to **visitors** too. If anyone refuses to be searched when asked, they will be asked **not** to come into the ward.



If any visitors are found to be giving patients things they shouldn't, they will be **asked to leave**. The police may also need to be involved.

## What are you not allowed on the ward



These are the items that are **banned from all wards**. They are known as **prohibited** items.



**Alcohol or drugs** of any kind. This includes tobacco and cigarettes.



**Weapons** of any kind. This includes guns, knives, bats and anything that **can cause serious harm**.



Things used to make fires or that are **fire hazards**. This includes matches, lighters and flammable liquids.



**Toxic or harmful chemicals.** For example, bleach.



**Pornographic material.** For example, photos or videos that are of sex or sexual situations.



Things that involve **hate speech**. For an example, a book about violence to people of different races, cultures, religions, or genders.

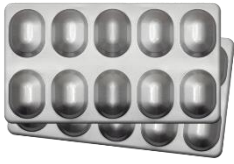


**Household items** like clingfilm, foil, rope, metal hangers and plastic bags. Chewing gum and blue tack are also banned items on **Forest Lodge low secure unit** and **Endcliffe PICU unit**.



**Laser pens.**





**Medication** the staff do not know about. There are **exceptions**. For example, if a patient needs an inhaler with them, **this will be arranged**.



There are also some items which are **not completely banned**. They are allowed on the ward if **looked after by staff**, but **only** given to people where there is a **low risk**.



They are known as **restricted items**.  
Restricted items include:



**Razors** or anything with a sharp edge. For example, nail clippers, tweezers, sewing kits.



**Aerosols** like deodorants, hairspray, shaving foam.



**Glass bottles and containers.** For example, perfumes.



**Tablets, personal devices,** and some other electrical equipment. This is based on a personal assessment and people may be allowed to have electrical equipment **if there is low risk.**



Mobile phones are usually allowed unless there is a specific safety issue. There will be a risk assessment if needed, and you will be told why it is not safe for you to have your phone.



**Money.**



Each ward is in charge of **assessing** what patients want to keep with them against the **risk** of them having certain items. Staff will be able to explain why certain things **are not allowed.**

## What happens when we take something away?



If we take something of yours, **you will be told why**. You will be told where they are being kept and be **given a receipt**, so you have a record of this.



Anything we store will be given back to you **when you leave the ward**.



If we have taken **dangerous or illegal** things from you, we **do not store them**. They will be removed in a safe way. You will be told about the items being removed and we will write this down.

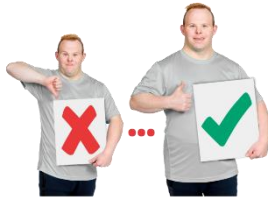
## Medication



If we are taking **medication** from you, we will put them in a case and **store them safely**. We will also talk to your doctor about your needs.



For example, you may have **painkillers** you bought over the counter. Your doctor will talk to you about them and look at **prescribing medication** if needed.



This is so we can **monitor** what you are taking while under our care. To make sure you get the **right treatment**.

## Alcohol or cigarettes



Open cans or bottles will be **emptied down drains**. Unopened cans or bottles can either be stored or given to relatives or carers. They can also be emptied and thrown away **if you agree to this**.



**Smoking** items will be either be stored or **given to carers or relatives**.



We are a **smoke free site**, so we may talk to you about **disposing** them or **quitting** if it is appropriate.

## Illegal or dangerous items



Illegal items like **drugs or weapons** will be disposed of. We have different policies depending on what items we are getting rid of. These will be **explained to you if needed**.



The only exception to this is when someone has a **religious item** that is **also a weapon**. The police will be asked how best to store this item, and it will be **treated with respect**.

## Searches and Human rights



When not done right, searches risk **breaching human rights**. We have many measures in place to make sure this **risk is as small as possible**.



All searches are done in a **calm and respectful way** and explained fully. We will always **ask your permission** before doing a search.



Staff **must always explain** why they are doing a search. It can never be done alone, and **it must be recorded** with all the details.



This is important so that there is less risk of a **search being done wrong**, or for staff to **discriminate** against someone.



**Discrimination** is where you treat someone unfairly because of their gender, race, sexual orientation, race, or disability. We want to make sure **no one** is being **searched unfairly**.

## Consent to being searched



Before any search happens, staff must try to gain your **informed consent**.

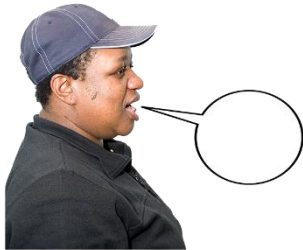


Informed consent is where someone **says yes** to something that they **fully understand**. Staff will do everything they can to explain things in **ways you understand**.





For example, this could be by making sure information is explained **in your language**. Or in **easy read**, such as this leaflet, or with any other **communication aids**.



It is always assumed that **people can communicate or speak for themselves** until we know otherwise.



But in some situations, people are **not able to give consent**. This could be because of their disability or mental health.



In this case, there may be someone in that person's life who **we can ask to speak for them**.



If the patient is **under 18**, special care needs to be taken. If possible, **their parents** will be involved in asking for consent. The ward has different policies when this isn't possible.

## What happens if you say no to being searched?



Sometimes you may not want to be searched and **refuse to give your consent**.



If this happens, we will do our best to **respect your decision**. But there are some situations where we still need to **search you or your things**.



An example of this is when staff know you have something that could **hurt you or people around you**.



Searches can also happen if there is a lot of evidence that you have **something dangerous**, even if it hasn't been proven yet.



If you **physically resist** a search, then it will only be carried out if the **risk is very high or urgent**. There are extra steps involved including having more senior staff there.



If there is time and you want someone to be there to represent you, this can be a **carer, family member, or an advocate.**



Even if we have to do the search, you **have the right to say no** and this will be written down. If you have been forced or threatened to give your consent, **this is against the law.**



There will be **support** for patients and staff after a search happens if needed. Especially if this a search **without consent.**

## What happens after a search?



Searches are part of the ways we **keep everyone safe.** Most searches happen with everyone knowing what's going on and are done **without any problems.**



There **will be support** for patients and staff after search happened without your consent.



If a search is **distressing** for you for whatever reason, **support will be given too.**



There will be a **report** made when there is a search without your consent, which will include involving of a **patient advocate or hospital manager.**



This leaflet has been developed from the Sheffield Health and Social care Trust **policy on Search.**



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