



Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984

1984 CHAPTER 60

PART V

QUESTIONING AND TREATMENT OF PERSONS BY POLICE

[^{F1}54A Searches and examination to ascertain identity

- (1) If an officer of at least the rank of inspector authorises it, a person who is detained in a police station may be searched or examined, or both—
 - (a) for the purpose of ascertaining whether he has any mark that would tend to identify him as a person involved in the commission of an offence; or
 - (b) for the purpose of facilitating the ascertainment of his identity.
- (2) An officer may only give an authorisation under subsection (1) for the purpose mentioned in paragraph (a) of that subsection if—
 - (a) the appropriate consent to a search or examination that would reveal whether the mark in question exists has been withheld; or
 - (b) it is not practicable to obtain such consent.
- (3) An officer may only give an authorisation under subsection (1) in a case in which subsection (2) does not apply if—
 - (a) the person in question has refused to identify himself; or
 - (b) the officer has reasonable grounds for suspecting that that person is not who he claims to be.
- (4) An officer may give an authorisation under subsection (1) orally or in writing but, if he gives it orally, he shall confirm it in writing as soon as is practicable.
- (5) Any identifying mark found on a search or examination under this section may be photographed—
 - (a) with the appropriate consent; or
 - (b) if the appropriate consent is withheld or it is not practicable to obtain it, without it.

Changes to legislation: Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, Section 54A is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 12 May 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

- (6) Where a search or examination may be carried out under this section, or a photograph may be taken under this section, the only persons entitled to carry out the search or examination, or to take the photograph, are^{F2} constables]
- (7) A person may not under this section carry out a search or examination of a person of the opposite sex or take a photograph of any part of the body of a person of the opposite sex.
- (8) An intimate search may not be carried out under this section.
- (9) A photograph taken under this section—
- (a) may be used by, or disclosed to, any person for any purpose related to the prevention or detection of crime, the investigation of an offence or the conduct of a prosecution; and
 - (b) after being so used or disclosed, may be retained but may not be used or disclosed except for a purpose so related.
- (10) In subsection —
- (a) the reference to crime includes a reference to any conduct which—
 - (i) constitutes one or more criminal offences (whether under the law of a part of the United Kingdom or of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom); or
 - (ii) is, or corresponds to, any conduct which, if it all took place in any one part of the United Kingdom, would constitute one or more criminal offences;
 and
 - (b) the references to an investigation and to a prosecution include references, respectively, to any investigation outside the United Kingdom of any crime or suspected crime and to a prosecution brought in respect of any crime in a country or territory outside the United Kingdom.
- (11) In this section—
- (a) references to ascertaining a person’s identity include references to showing that he is not a particular person; and
 - (b) references to taking a photograph include references to using any process by means of which a visual image may be produced, and references to photographing a person shall be construed accordingly.
- (12) In this section “mark” includes features and injuries; and a mark is an identifying mark for the purposes of this section if its existence in any person’s case facilitates the ascertainment of his identity or his identification as a person involved in the commission of an offence.

[Nothing in this section applies to a person arrested under an extradition arrest power.]
^{F3}(13)

Textual Amendments

- F1** S. 54A inserted (14.12.2001) by 2001 c. 24, s. 90(1)
- F2** Words in s. 54A(6) substituted (2.12.2002) by Police Reform Act 2002 (c.30), s. 107, Sch. 7 {para. 9(2)}; S.I. 2002/2750, art. 2(b)(ii)
- F3** S. 54A(13) inserted (1.1.2004) by Extradition Act 2003 (c. 41), ss. 169(2), 221; S.I. 2003/3103, art. 2 (subject to savings in Order (as amended by S.I. 2003/3312, art. 2(2) and S.I. 2003/3258, art. 2(2)))

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Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 54A applied (with modifications) (25.6.2013) by The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Application to immigration officers and designated customs officials in England and Wales) Order 2013 (S.I. 2013/1542), arts. 1, 12(2)-(4), **Sch. 2** (with arts. 13-31)
- C2** S. 54A applied (with modifications) (31.12.2006) by The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Application to the Armed Forces) Order 2006 (S.I. 2006/2015), arts. 2, 3, **Schs. 1-3**
S. 54A applied (with modifications) by Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44), s. 24B(7) (as inserted (29.6.2007) by Police and Justice Act 2006 (c. 48), **ss. 18(1)**, 53 (with s. 18(2)); S.I. 2007/1614, **art. 2(e)**)

Changes to legislation:

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to :

- s. 54A applied (with modifications) by [2022 c. 32 s. 107\(7\)](#)

Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 17(1)(cza) inserted by [2021 c. 17 s. 26\(9\)](#)
- s. 47A(3A) substituted by [2022 c. 35 Sch. 2 para. 7](#)
- s. 61(6BA) inserted by [2008 c. 28 s. 10\(1\)](#) (This amendment not applied to [legislation.gov.uk](#). S. 10 omitted (14.12.2011) by virtue of 2011 c. 23, ss. 29, 31(2), Sch. 7 para. 5(3))
- s. 63(3D) inserted by [2008 c. 28 s. 10\(2\)](#) (This amendment not applied to [legislation.gov.uk](#). S. 10 omitted (14.12.2011) by virtue of 2011 c. 23, ss. 29, 31(2), Sch. 7 para. 5(3))
- s. 64(1AA) inserted by [2008 c. 28 s. 10\(4\)](#) (This amendment not applied to [legislation.gov.uk](#). S. 10 omitted (14.12.2011) by virtue of 2011 c. 23, ss. 29, 31(2), Sch. 7 para. 5(3))
- s. 64A(1B)(cb) inserted by [2022 c. 32 Sch. 11 para. 18\(a\)](#)
- Sch. 1A para. 21A added by 1995 c. 32, s. 8B(1) (as inserted) by [2006 c. 12 Sch. 3 para. 13](#)