



Freedom of Information Request Reference No: FOI 13205- Spit Hoods policy and usage 2017-2019

Signposting - links to information already in public domain:

<https://www.essex.police.uk/police-forces/essex-police/areas/essex-police/sd/stats-and-data/use-of-force/>

Information Requested:

I note you seek access to the following information:

- 1) The guidance issued to Essex Police Force in relation to the use of spit hoods
- 2) Any document pertaining to the procedure of their use
- 3) Any document pertaining to the justification for their use
- 4) The amount of times a spit hood has been used by Essex Police in 2017, 2018 and 2019
- 5) The amount of times a spit hood has been used by Essex Police on a person under the age of 18 in 2017, 2018 and 2019
- 6) The training required for an Essex police officer to utilise a spit hood, what qualification is provided, and how often this has to be renewed

Disclosure and Exemptions: (Full/Partial/Refused): **Partial**

Having completed enquiries within Essex Police and in respect of Sec 1(1) (a), Essex Police does hold information relating to your request. Under Section 1(1) (b) the below has been provided in relation to your FOI submission.

Response:

Please find below the response to your **request issued on 03/06/2019.**

Information correct as of 30/05/2019.

1. Adherence to the National College of Policing syllabus.
2. Please see below extract from policy D0710 – Use of Personal Protective Equipment:

3.6 Spit Guards

As personal protective equipment (PPE), all appropriately trained operational officers and special constabulary will be issued spit guards. Spit guards allow officers to protect themselves in accordance with their training and the principles regarding the use of force from detained persons who spit at them.

Spit guards allow officers to protect themselves in accordance with their training and the principles regarding the use of force from detained persons and others who spit.

Only Essex Police approved and issued spit guards will be carried and used.

Issue and replacement of spit guard will be done from custody, no officer will use the spit guard unless they have received training in its use. Officers should ensure that the spit guard is new and undamaged and prepared for use.

Spit guards should only be used in circumstances where (i) the person has been arrested, (ii) a person threatens to spit, has attempted to spit or has already spat, and (ii) its use is the most proportionate method of protecting the public, officers or staff.

The decision to use a spit guard rests with each individual officer and the use will be recorded in the officers PNB and on the Use of Force form. Officers should use BWV to support their rationale.

Reasonable Grounds - In considering what action is necessary and proportionate, an officer should apply the principles of the National Decision Model to support the justification of using a spit guard, taking into account all the accompanying circumstances at the time. There must always be objective basis for the decision to use the spit guard.

Officers should take care and consideration when considering the use of a spit guard on persons displaying mental illness, Acute Behavioural Disorder, exhibiting learning difficulties or any other psychological impairment will likely create disorientation, stress and anxiety. This is a significant factor to be taken into account by officers when considering the application of a spit guard. The vulnerability of juveniles should also be taken into account when considering applying a spit guard.

Officers must warn the detained person that a spit guard will be used to protect officers.

If a subject has been sprayed with CS spray then they must be decontaminated before a spit hood is used.

Under no circumstances should a subject be left unattended whilst wearing a spit guard.

Officers should keep everyone wearing a spit guard under constant supervision.

The spit guard should be removed at the earliest opportunity.

If used in custody a A740 custody use of force form must be completed by the custody officer. Any involvement of a Force Medical Officer (FMO) will be a matter for the Custody Officer.

Where possible, consideration should be given to the removal of eye wear from the subject prior to the use, and consideration given to the removal of any jewellery that might become entangled.

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The officer must inform the custody officer if a spit guard has been used.

Once used, the spit guard should be disposed of as per Divisional Bio-Hazard protocols. A replacement spit guard can be obtained from Custody.

3. Please see above.

4. Essex Police only holds the Use of Force data from April 2018, therefore, for the period April 2018 to March 2019, the figures are:

- 2018 – 68 incidents of Spit Guards being used
- 2019 – 70 incidents of Spit Guards being used.

5. Essex Police only holds the Use of Force data from April 2018, therefore, for the period April 2018 to March 2019, the figures are:

- 2018 – 5 persons under the age of 18
- 2019 – 3 persons under the age of 18.

6. Training in adherence to the National College of Policing syllabus, which is delivered to all Officers and a refresher on an annual basis.