



Freedom of Information request ref 01/FOI/25/3563
We received your request on the 25/07/2025.

Request

You asked us:

I am requesting your spit hood usage policy and guidelines on how to use and when

We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Our response:

Please see the attached pdf

Management and Deployment of Spit and Bite Guards Policy

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Purpose of the Policy

British Transport Police (BTP) has a duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to provide adequate personal safety equipment and training for all relevant personnel who could potentially face violent situations involving Spitting and Biting.



This policy has been put in place to set out the criteria for the selection and acquisition of protective equipment known as Spit and Bite Guards (SBGs). It also sets the standards for the training and deployment of SBGs. The aim of this policy is to ensure that there is an efficient and consistent approach adopted across the Force regarding the use of SBGs.

Who does this policy apply to

This policy is applicable to all BTP Police Officers, Special Constables (SC's), Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) and Police Staff in England, Scotland and Wales (these groups will be referred to as relevant personnel throughout this policy).

Principles

BTP has seen an increase in notifiable crimes involving spitting.

Relevant personnel are likely to encounter incidents which can have significant health risk from transmission of infection through contaminated body fluids from Spitting by non-compliant violent subjects, being detained or in custody. Spit Guards provide an additional tactical option to be considered in such circumstances.

A Spit Guard is a transparent black, breathable mesh hood that is placed over the subject's head to restrict the transfer of body fluids from the mouth of the subject by means of spitting. An SBG will not prevent someone from biting, but it will help to minimise the risk of infection where teeth puncture skin. Its application should prevent a person from spitting beyond the confines of the guard and allow for the safe transportation of a person being conveyed to/in prisoner transport, to a suitable place of detention or whilst in that detention facility.

Procedure

1. Formal Procedure

1.1. This Procedure sets out the criteria for the selection and acquisition of protective equipment known as Spit and Bite Guards (SBGs). It sets the standards for the training and deployment of SBGs.

2. Deployment Principles

- Only BTP approved SBGs are to be used (KIT Design 1914-B-Spit Guard).
- The use of an SBG is considered to be a use of force.
- Use of SBGs should be proportionate, legally compliant and only used where considered necessary.



- Relevant personnel will be accountable for their use of SBGs and will make a written record following every use.
- SBGs will be carried and used only by trained relevant personnel.
- SBGs will be used in accordance with training and manufacturers guidance.

3. Operational Use

3.1. SBGs should only be used in circumstances where the actions of the subject are such that they represent a significant risk to the safety of relevant personnel and themselves. There are a number of scenarios in which it is acknowledged that the Spit Guard may be used:

- Moving a person from the scene of an arrest to a police vehicle.
- Transporting a person to a location (custody suite, place of safety).
- Placing a person into a police vehicle or cell.

3.2. Use of an SBG is to be considered as one of a number of tactical options available to relevant personnel who is faced with a subject who is:

- Spitting or Biting.
- Preparing to Spit or Bite.
- Threatening to Spit or Bite.
- Has Spat or Bitten.

3.3. The decision to use a SBG Guard rests with the individual officer and the use will be recorded in the officer's ePNB and subsequent statement.

3.4. If a SBG is used officers **must** complete a Use of Force form.

3.5. Reasonable Grounds – In considering what action is reasonable, an officer should apply the principles of the Authorised Professional Practice (APP) National Decision Model (NDM) especially impact factors such as age and gender, respective size and apparent strength and fitness may or may not support the justification of using the SBG, taking into account all the accompanying circumstances at the time. There **must** always be an objective basis for the decision to use the SBG.

3.6. The SBG needs a minimum of two officers working together to control the subject to correctly apply it. The subject should be handcuffed to the rear before an SBG is applied.

3.7. Under no circumstances should a subject be left unattended whilst wearing an SBG. Relevant personnel should keep anyone wearing an SBG under constant supervision due to the potential risk of it inducing an asthma attack, vomiting, difficulty in breathing or causing a restriction from a facial bleed.



- 3.8. If the SBG is used the custody officer **must** be informed and the custody record should be endorsed accordingly by the Custody Officer. A requirement for a Force Medical Examiner (FME) will be a matter for the Custody Officer.
- 3.9. Where possible, strong 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.
- 3.10. Where "Captor 2" has been deployed relevant personnel should be aware that this may cause the subject additional distress and cause them to produce excessive amount of mucus and saliva.
- 3.11. On occasions, an elevated level of distress may be shown by the detained person when a SBG is applied. Relevant personnel should provide verbal re-assurance and dynamically assess the situation with a view to removal if appropriate. In the event of a medical emergency the Spit Guard should be removed immediately.
- 3.12. Once used, the SBG should be disposed of as per Divisional Bio-Hazard protocols. A replacement SBG can be obtained from BTP custody or online using a uniform order form.
- 3.13. Where SBGs are used relevant personnel **must** ensure that the detained persons are suitably assisted when moved, as visibility may be impaired when the SBG is in use. Relevant personnel **must** be aware of the requirements and techniques for safe movement of persons to ensure that they do not expose themselves to injury when carrying this out.
- 3.14. Relevant personnel need to consider the individual's medical conditions or any apparent pre-existing medical conditions when considering the use of a SBG. These include asthma, vomiting and bleeding from the nose or mouth. In the case of a facial injury relevant personnel **must** take account of this and consider the potential impact of applying the SBG.
- 3.15. Officers should consider looking for SOS/Medicaid wrist bands, Talisman necklaces or medication which may indicate a person has a pre-existing medical condition.

4. Verbal Warnings

- 4.1. Where circumstances permit, relevant personnel should give a clear warning of their intent to use the SBG. They should give sufficient time for the warning to be heeded, unless to do so would unduly place any person at further risk or would be clearly inappropriate or impractical in the circumstances of the incident.
- 4.2. Relevant personnel shall give the clear verbal warning:



“Stop Spitting, Stop Spitting if you continue to Spit or threaten to Spit, I will use a Spit and Bite Guard”

5. Aftercare

- 5.1. Recovery from the effects of the use of a SBG should be instantaneous, it is important that relevant personnel provide verbal reassurance as to the temporary effects and use of the SBG and instructs the subject to breathe normally. This will aid recovery and mitigate against hyperventilation. Should the subject not recover, first aid should be rendered immediately, and the incident should be treated as a medical emergency.
- 5.2. Following the use of Captor officers and staff should have an increased awareness of the needs of the subject when an SBG has been used. Captor aftercare procedures should be followed.
- 5.3. Officers have a duty of care in relation to the safety and wellbeing of subjects under their control. Where it is evident that the subject becomes unduly distressed or a medical emergency the SBG should be removed immediately.
- 5.4. If the subject displays any breathing difficulties because of the use of an SBG it is to be removed immediately and seek medical attention if necessary.

6. Administrative Roles

- 6.1. Use of Force forms will be managed and audited by the Use of Force Compliance Team via the BTP Use of Force App and Online Portal.

7. Training

- 7.1. All training in respect SBGs will be conducted during initial and refresher Personal Safety Training. This training will be delivered by qualified and accredited personal safety trainers.

8. Governance and Compliance

- 8.1. All aspects of the deployment and use of SBGs will be monitored as part of the wider responsibility of the Use of force Compliance Team under the strategic oversight of the Use of Force and Officer Safety Board.

Additional Information

Associated Policies/Documents

[Authorised Professional Practice Guidance – Use of Force](#)

[Authorised Professional Practice - National Decision Model](#)



Acronyms

ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
APP	Authorised Professional Practice
BTP	British Transport Police
FME	Force Medical Examiner
NDM	National Decision Model
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
ePNB	Electronic Pocket Notebook
SC	Special Constable
SBG	Spit and Bite Guard
ACC	Assistant Chief Constable

End of Policy**Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be monitored within the scope of the “Use of Force and Officer Safety Board” chaired by ACC Network Policing. It will be reviewed once every three years (unless circumstances dictate it should be reviewed more frequently) to ensure that the most up to date and relevant process for managing BTP policy is in place.

Who to contact regarding this Policy

This policy is owned by the Chief Superintendent of E Division. Any enquiries about this policy should be directed to the Specialist Operations Team by emailing the Chief Inspector Armed Policing.



Policy Sponsor	ACC Network Policing
Policy Owner	Chief Superintendent, E Division
Policy Author	Inspector, E Division

Version	Date	Reason for amendments	Amended by (job title)
0.1	03/02/2017	Spit Guard Policy created and finalised ready for consultation/EIA carried out	T/Insp Specialist Operations
0.2	03/02/2017	Minor review before consultation, consultation sent out on 03/02/2017	Policy Team, Strategy & Performance
0.3	28/02/2017	Minor amendments made following consultation feedback	T/Insp Specialist Operations
2.0	13/02/2020	Review	Insp E Division
2.1	09/03/2022	Change of owner	Chief Insp E Division
3.0	19/04/2022	Review	Chief Insp E Division
4.0	08/11/2023	Review	T/Insp E Division

