

POCKET NOTEBOOKS POLICY

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NORFOLK
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POCKET NOTEBOOKS POLICY

Owning Department: Norfolk and Suffolk County Policing Commands

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Legal Basis

Legislation specific to the subject of this policy document:

- Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996
- Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Para 3.1 of Code D

Other relevant legislation which you must check this document against (required by law)

- [Human Rights Act 1998 \(in particular A.14 – Prohibition of discrimination\)](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)
- [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated Regulations](#)
- [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) and Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [Freedom Of Information Act 2000](#)
- [The Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)

Other documentation which you must check this document against:

- [College of Policing – Code of Ethics](#)
- [Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies' Standards of Professional Behaviour](#)
- [College of Policing – Authorised Professional Practice](#)
- Intelligence Interviews Policy
- Information Security Incident and Data Breach Reporting and Management policy
- Review, Retention and Disposal Schedule

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1. Statement of Policy

- 1.1 This policy has been formally agreed via the approved policy development/review process. It will be maintained by the County Policing Commands in conjunction with the Central Policy Unit.
- 1.2 The policy is intended to promote equality, eliminate unlawful discrimination and actively promote good relations regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, economic or family status.
- 1.3 Managers have a responsibility to ensure this policy is applied fairly, and unless otherwise stated, all policies and procedures are non-contractual.

2. Applicability

- 2.1 This policy applies to any officer or member of staff who uses a pocket notebook.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 The Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 imposes a duty on the police to record, retain and reveal material obtained during the course of an investigation. This duty extends to all police staff engaged in an investigation and encompasses those enquiries which may subsequently become disclosable, including those matters that may be seen to support or undermine the prosecution case. These provisions range from simple traffic offences to complex major crime investigations.
- 3.2 Pocket Notebooks (PNBs) are issued primarily for the use of making notes relating to incidents, events and issues. These notes may be used later to refresh the memory for the giving of accurate and reliable information at court.
- 3.3 The aim of this policy is to outline the correct use of PNBs but officers and staff should also refer to their training in relation to completion of PNBs.
- 3.4 The rules set out in this policy must be followed to support the integrity of PNB entries. Failure to comply may lead a court to question the accuracy and integrity of the evidence and may lead to the exclusion of the evidence and the dismissal of the case.

4. Neurodivergent Police Officers and Staff

- 4.1 Different colour paged PNBs are available in order to accommodate the individual divergent needs of officers and staff.
- 4.2 Staff responsible for issuing PNBs should make a record of any reasonable adjustments required so an individual does not need to specify these needs every time a new PNB is requested.
- 4.3 Support for neurodivergent officers and staff can be found on the intranet.

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5. Issue of Pocket Notebooks

5.1 PNBs are issued to individuals within Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies, but remain the property of the respective Constabulary with which that individual is employed or engaged.

5.2 New PNBs will be issued to the following:

- Police Officers*
- Special Officers
- Enquiry Officers
- Police Staff Investigators
- Police Community Support Officers (Suffolk only)

**Officers engaged solely on administrative, Learning and Development department, control room, or community affairs duties do not need to maintain a PNB. Officers above the rank of inspector need only maintain PNBs for official recording purposes (e.g. operational investigation of complaints). Any officers and staff who move to a role which does not require PNB entries to be made, are required to keep the PNB secure until needed.*

Some officers of Inspector rank and above opt to use an A4 'Blue Book' for day to day notes. Those officers who use these are responsible for transferring anything evidential into the appropriate location, e.g., a Pocket Notebook, Firearms log, Public Order log as necessary. Officers are responsible for the safekeeping of their Blue Books and these should be disposed of appropriately. Advice on retention and disposal should be sought from Records Management if necessary.

5.3 All PNBs have an individual serial number and Admin staff are responsible for ensuring a record is maintained on TranSearch of who each PNB has been issued to. (See Appendix A for guidance notes)

5.4 Upon being issued a PNB, the person receiving it must ensure all the pages are intact and correctly numbered.

5.5 The officer or staff member must enter their rank, number and name on the front of the book, as well as the operative date.

6. Requesting a New PNB

6.1 It is the officer's/staff member's responsibility to ensure they request a new PNB in plenty of time before their current one is full.

6.2 The process for requesting a new PNB is different for Norfolk and Suffolk as outlined below:

Suffolk

6.3 A new PNB must be requested via area Admin staff, who will hold a small stock of PNBs on site and update Transearch with the relevant issuing

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details. (See Appendix A for guidance notes). An Admin Contact list is available on the Suffolk CPC Intranet site.

- 6.4 A stock of PNBs will also be kept in the Sergeant's safe for when a new PNB is required at those stations where no Admin staff are based, or outside of Admin staff office hours.
- 6.5 If a PNB is issued by a Sergeant, the Sergeant will be responsible for emailing the relevant Admin support with the details of the issue (PNB serial number, to whom issued, time and date) who will then update Transearch with those details. (See Appendix A)
- 6.6 Admin staff will ensure a supply of new PNBs is held locally. If the Sergeant's stock of PNBs is getting low, they will need to advise Admin support staff of this, who will order more via ERP.

Norfolk

- 6.7 A new PNB must be requested via the PNB Request email address where admin staff will deal with the request and issue a new PNB updating Transearch with the relevant issuing details, as per Appendix A.

7. General Use

- 7.1 Officers and staff required to maintain PNBs must have the book in their possession and available for use at all times whilst on operational duty, unless it would be impractical or inappropriate to do so, e.g. when on surveillance or undercover duties.
- 7.2 At the start of each shift, the date should be recorded and underlined at the beginning of entries for that shift.
- 7.3 Entries must:
 - Be made at the time or as soon as practicable after the event. The reason for any delay in recording must be noted.
 - Include a time and location.
 - Not be erased or obliterated. Mistakes must be crossed out by a single line so the original word/words remain legible. Any deletions must be initialled and followed with the replacement word/wording.
 - Be legible. It is recognised that the circumstances in which officers and staff have to make entries in their PNB may make it difficult to maintain neat writing, but all entries must be legible.
 - Be in black ink (to aid photocopying/scanning).
- 7.4 Pages and lines must not be left blank. Where whole or part pages are accidentally left blank, a diagonal line should be drawn across the blank area and 'Omitted in error' written across the page.

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- 7.5 Full details of victims, offenders and witnesses should be recorded in the PNB unless recorded elsewhere at the time. Surnames must be recorded in block capitals.
- 7.6 Where possible, direct speech must be used to record a person's account of an incident.
- 7.7 Notes should be made of any comments made by a person suspected of committing an offence whether these comments are in response to specific questions asked or not. The person should be invited to read the entry and write an endorsement to the effect: 'I certify that this is a true and accurate record of the conversation that took place.' This should be signed by the suspect and the officer/staff member as the conversation may be construed to be an interview. If the suspect does not consider it to be correct, they should be asked to indicate which details are considered to be inaccurate and to sign a record of those details.
- 7.8 If a suspect refuses to read or sign the entry, this should be recorded and signed by the officer/staff member.
- 7.9 If appropriate, sketches can be drawn where doing so will help the recording of evidence.

8. When to Make an Entry

- 8.1 The diversity of events with which officers/staff may be involved makes it impossible to provide a comprehensive guide as to when an entry should be made in the PNB or the precise detail it should contain.
- 8.2 The general rule is that it should be used to record all information or intelligence relating to offences and other events or incidents that come to notice, where it is likely that a report or statement will have to be completed, e.g. a record must be made of the description of any suspect as first given by a witness (disclosure of any such description to the suspect or their solicitor is mandatory to any identification procedure). This requirement is made by the Codes of Practice to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Para 3.1 of Code D.
- 8.3 Details to be included are:
 - Evidential matters where no other primary record exists.
 - Matters that may be, or may become, relevant to an investigation, which are not recorded elsewhere.
 - Significant incidents which are not recorded immediately elsewhere.
 - Brief details of Police National Computer (PNC) / Law Enforcement Data Service (LEDS) vehicle and name checks.
 - Property coming into police possession that is not recorded elsewhere.
 - Decision making process and outcomes.

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- 8.4 Discretion should be used to record details of other items. There will frequently be occasions when the information recorded elsewhere is insufficient for meaningful recall later, e.g. domestic violence incidents.
- 8.5 Where a matter is considered to be contentious or worthy of more detailed recording, an entry should be made in the PNB.
- 8.6 When forms or pro-forma, e.g. fixed penalty notices, accident report book, offence report sheets, crime reports and incident logs, are completed, a brief PNB entry should be made confirming that the original document has been completed.
- 8.7 When practicable and efficient to do so, original notes may be written in the form of a Criminal Justice Act statement. If the original notes are made in statement form, a brief PNB entry must be made noting when and where the statement was made.
- 8.8 Guidance on recording of intelligence interviews can be found in the Intelligence Interviews policy.
- 8.9 The PNB should not be regarded as a minute-by-minute account of an officer's/staff member's tour of duty. If no entries are required, no entry needs to be made but details of each tour of duty should be recorded, i.e. date and time of the shift start and finish and refreshment times.
- 8.10 Periods spent on courses or annual leave can be covered by a block entry giving the dates covered.

9. No Pocket Notebook Available

- 9.1 If, for any reason, the PNB is not available, e.g. when off duty, officers/staff should use any paper available for the purpose of making notes.
- 9.2 The general rules of note taking as outlined in this policy should be followed where possible.
- 9.3 The note must be preserved as an exhibit and attached to any subsequent case papers.
- 9.4 It may be used in court in the same way as a PNB entry.

10. Conferring – Two or More Officers/Staff at an Incident

- 10.1 Where two or more officers or members of staff have attended an incident or been engaged on enquiries which require a PNB entry to be made, then all officers/staff must make full PNB entries.
- 10.2 Officers/staff may make their PNB entries together and, if necessary, may confer with each other. However, officers/staff must record only what they have seen and heard for themselves. If officers/staff make their notes in the presence of others then the PNB entry should record when (date and time) and where the notes were made and with whom.

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10.3 Conferring when making PNB entries is permissible because it may evoke memory of a detail which was not initially recalled. However, it is not permissible for officers/staff to pool their recollections when conferring.

10.4 Conferring is not permitted where non-conferring guidance has been given, for example, during a Post Incident Procedure (PIP).

11. Entries at the Rear of the Pocket Notebook

11.1 The rear pages should only be used for incidental, non-evidential notes such as regularly used telephone numbers or an index of cases dealt with. The general rules of note taking should be followed wherever possible.

11.2 Circulation messages (e.g. of wanted persons or stolen vehicles) can be entered at the rear of the book and must be kept under review and cancelled as and when necessary.

11.3 Original notes should not be made at the rear of the PNB before preceding pages have been used.

12. Inspections

12.1 Supervisors are required to carry out inspections of PNBs on a monthly basis. This should not be done on a pre-arranged basis.

12.2 Supervisors must sign PNBs when they have been examined, but there is no requirement for a list of PNB checks to be maintained.

12.3 When checking PNBs, supervisors should ensure compliance with this policy and take appropriate action should deficiencies be identified in the way a PNB is being used/completed/stored.

12.4 Should matters be identified relating to a PNB which may have a bearing on a prosecution, these must be brought to the attention of the relevant Criminal Justice Unit.

13. Loss of or Damage to Pocket Notebooks

13.1 Officers/staff issued with a PNB are responsible for its safekeeping care.

13.2 If the PNB is lost or stolen, it is the PNB owner's responsibility to inform Information Security immediately.

13.3 If the PNB is damaged, e.g. pages become loose, it is the PNB owner's responsibility to inform their supervisor as soon as possible and details of the damage must be recorded and endorsed by the supervisor. Unused pages of the damaged PNB should be scored through and the PNB returned to Records Management Department. A new one should be obtained in the normal manner.

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14. Retention and Disposal

- 14.1 Upon completion, or upon leaving either Constabulary, officers/staff must ensure any entries required for evidential purposes (investigation/intelligence) are copied onto the relevant system or file before forwarding the PNB to Records Management for centralised and off-site storage.
- 14.2 TranSearch will automatically send an email reminder to anyone who has been issued a PNB who has not forwarded the completed book to Records Management within one year of it being issued. Users will be required to either forward the completed book or give a justifiable reason for the book not having been completed in that time, e.g. not been on operational duties for an extended period of time.
- 14.3 The Records Management Department will retain PNBs in accordance with the Review, Retention and Disposal Schedule.
- 14.4 If retention is required beyond the standard period set in the schedule, it is the officer's/staff member's responsibility to document the reasons why and make the Records Management Department aware of these requirements.
- 14.5 Retaining a PNB without permission and knowledge of a supervisor could lead to misconduct proceedings.
- 14.6 Disposal of centrally filed PNBs will be undertaken in accordance with the Review, Retention and Disposal Schedule, and will be via the confidential waste system.

15. Use of Pocket Notebooks in Court

- 15.1 When a PNB is required for use in a court appearance, if it is not a current PNB, i.e. has been submitted for retention, contact the Records Management Department for its release from storage.
- 15.2 Refer only to the notes relevant to the incident in question and only for the purposes of refreshing memory.
- 15.3 If required, submit the PNB for the scrutiny of the court.
- 15.4 When the PNB is no longer required, return to Records Management for storage if necessary, i.e. if the PNB is not current.

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Appendix A – Guidelines for Registering and Issuing a new PNB on TranSearch

Registering and Issuing a New PNB – Quick Guide on the Two-Step Process

TranSearch PNB Module: Full Guide