Merseyside Police - Visual Impairment Protocol

Overview for service users

# What is the Visual Impairment Protocol?

The Visual Impairment Protocol helps safeguard visually impaired members of the community who need to confirm if a person at their door is a police officer.

Use of the protocol is optional, but it does add a layer of security and assurance when visual identification of a police officer by their uniform or warrant card is impractical.

Depending upon the reason for calling at your address, the officer may not need to come into your property. If it’s appropriate, they may be able to discuss matters at the door, but you still have the option to use the Visual Impairment Protocol to verify their identity.

# Who can use this service?

The protocol can be used by anyone with a visual impairment, to any degree, and regardless of whether they have a guide dog or not. Other eligible service users would include anyone who cares for or supports someone who is visually impaired.

Those members of the community living with dual sensory loss can also use the protocol but depending on the severity of the hearing loss, it may be best that a carer or someone else in their support network, assists.

# How does the protocol work?

The service user is safeguarded by allowing them to verify the identity of a police officer that has called at their address, before letting the officer into the premises. This verification is facilitated by the Police Contact Centre, either over the phone or by the attending officer using an agreed password.

The individual steps to be followed when using the protocol can be found at the end of this document. For ease of use, the steps are also listed in the quick reference guide.

# When can the protocol be used?

There are two scenarios when the protocol can be used.

Firstly, when someone with a visual impairment or someone calling on their behalf, calls 1 0 1  
or 9 9 9, they can ask the Police Contact Centre to use the protocol. In this scenario, a memorable one-time-password is chosen, and this is shared with the officer that is dispatched to their address. When the officer arrives, they will be expected to state the password to the person answering the door. If the officer cannot give the password, they should not be allowed into the property.

The protocol can also be applied in a second scenario where the service user has not initially called the police. In this scenario the officer’s attendance could be planned, for example a pre-arranged appointment, or unplanned, such as spontaneous house-to-house enquiries. In either case, the service user would call 1 0 1 and confirm the identity of the officer by verifying their collar number, purpose for the visit, and a log number if this is available. If this information cannot be verified, the person at the door should not be allowed into the property.

# Calling 1 0 1

The Police Contact Centre will answer 1 0 1 calls as soon as possible. At times of peak demand, there may be a short delay, so please be patient and keep your door closed and locked whilst making the call.

The officer may say that they will return in a few minutes to give you time to make the call. You should not feel pressured to hurry the process, the officer understands, and they will attend to other duties nearby.

# Some notes on safety and security

It is always best to be cautious when answering the door to someone you don’t know. Use a door chain or bar if one is fitted and never let anyone into your property if you are unsure of their identity.

All Merseyside Police officers have been briefed on the Visual Impairment Protocol and will understand when you ask them to wait outside while you use the protocol. A police officer will never insist on entering your property to wait while you make the call to confirm their identity.

An officer will never tell you that you don’t need to verify their identity. If you wish to use the protocol, they will support you in doing this. They will not, however, offer you their own phone for you to make the necessary call.

The officer may ask for some time while they contact the Police Contact Centre to check information. Please allow them to do this as they may have been asked to attend your address at short notice. If something doesn’t feel right though, and you are worried that the person at the door is not really a police officer, call 9 9 9.

# Using police powers to enter your property

It is a police officer’s duty to protect life. In an emergency, they may need to enter the premises without delay to achieve this.

An officer may also exercise police powers under very specific circumstances to enter your property. Examples of this range from preventing serious damage to property, to arresting somebody for an indictable offence. These circumstances are laid out in law and such police powers are only used where necessary.

Should any police officer have to enter your property without waiting for you to use the Visual Impairment Protocol, they will give clear instructions to you and anyone else in the property. The officer will describe events and ensure you are fully informed of what is happening.

# Steps to follow when using the Visual Impairment Protocol

This final section describes the steps to be taken for the two scenarios when using the Visual Impairment Protocol with Merseyside Police.

Note, for ease of use, these steps are also listed on their own in the quick reference guide.

# Steps for scenario 1, when you need to call the police and verify the identity of the officer that attends

* The protocol begins when you call 1 0 1, or if it is an emergency, when you call 9 9 9.
* When you are connected to the Police Contact Centre, tell the call handler that you would like to use the Visual Impairment Protocol.
* The call handler will ask you to choose a memorable one-time-password. They will help you if you are not sure what to choose. In an emergency, they may pick a password for you.
* The Police Contact Centre will inform the officer attending that the Visual Impairment Protocol is being used, and what the one-time-password is.
* When the officer attends your address, you should ask the officer for the password without letting them in.
* The officer’s response will either be:
  + The **correct password**, allowing you to admit them into the property.
  + OR, an **incorrect password or no password provided**, which should prompt you to contact 9 9 9 and ask for the police. When you are connected to the Police Contact Centre, explain that you are using the Visual Impairment Protocol, and you are unable to verify the person at your door is a police officer. The police call handler will assist you.

That concludes the steps for scenario 1.

# Steps for scenario 2, when you need to verify the identity of an officer that has called at your address, but you did not initiate the visit

* The protocol begins when a police officer calls at your address and you wish to verify their identity.
* Without letting them in, tell the officer that you would like to use the Visual Impairment Protocol.
* The officer should provide you with their collar number, purpose for the visit, and a log number if this is available. Record this information by whatever method is easiest for you. This could be using assistive technology such as a voice recorder or your phone. If you are partially sighted, you can ask the officer to write the details down clearly to assist you.
* The officer may explain that they will come back a little later, or they may wait outside while you verify their identity.
* Call the Police Contact Centre on 1 0 1 and ask to use the Visual Impairment Protocol to verify the officer’s identity.
* Tell the police call handler the log number, the officer’s collar number, and purpose for the visit.
* The police call handler’s response will either be:
  + The **details are confirmed**, allowing you to admit the officer into the property.
  + OR, the **details are not confirmed**, which should prompt the call handler to dispatch a police officer to check on your welfare. A memorable one-time-password will be used to verify the identity of that officer, in the same way as scenario 1.

That concludes the steps for scenario 2.

For more information about the Visual Impairment Protocol at Merseyside Police, visit the force website at [www.merseyside.police.uk/vip](https://www.merseyside.police.uk/vip)