

Legal Observers



Why are they important?

During all actions, but particularly those mobilising many people, it is vital to have impartial observers monitoring police behaviour and tactics as well as taking notes on any incidents to ensure proper accountability. Often, the presence of observers alone is enough to keep the police in check and ensure participants in direct action feel safe and supported. The benefit of maintaining impartiality, and the use of the word 'legal', is that members of the public and the police may be less likely to act inappropriately if they know they are being watched by someone who is (a) not part of the action, and (b) has an understanding of the law.

It can be difficult to know what to do when an incident is unfolding. Trained observers can ensure that any witness statements are collected to assist the participant in any related proceedings.

Am I at risk of being arrested?

The observers are primarily stood back from any direct action and should not be seen to be involved. You will be equipped with hi-vis identifying you as an observer, and generally the police respect that role. There is very low risk of arrest provided you stay aware of your surroundings.

Do I need legal experience or knowledge?

You do not need any previous experience, however it is helpful to have a good understanding of some of the basics when it comes to police powers and responsibilities.

What does a legal observer do?

You are present at actions to collect as much useful information as possible, provide an oversight for police and public behaviour and forward that information to a central collection point. This information can be useful in understanding trends and predicting police behaviour, or for use in preparing reports and media around the use of any inappropriate tactics.

When an incident occurs you should: (Who, What, When, Where, Words)

- Record as much detail as possible (time, location, name and station or ID of officers involved, name and contact details for protesters involved, anything said by police, what happened)
- Identify those who were filming and take their name and contact details to retrieve footage later
- Approach witnesses and ask them to fill out a witness statement - you can download blank witness statement forms

What to record throughout the day

Record as much detail as possible in chronological order. Use your intuition to record what doesn't seem right or just.

Time	Record the time throughout the day even when nothing is happening. That way if an incident occurs and you aren't able to record the time it's easier to work out when it happened.
Location	Note in detail where you are whenever you move.

Consider:

How many police are present at an action? What kind of police? Are they using mounted police? How many negotiators? Do they have batons? Are they respecting the role of police liaison? Are they conducting stop and searches? Or collecting people's names? Are they using kettling tactics? Cordoning off certain areas? Preventing free passage? How are they cordoning? How are they performing arrests? Lines or snatch squads? Are they using force - pain compliance grips, handcuffs, pressure points? Do they have evidence gathering teams? What are they saying? Are they warning before arrest? Do the tactics change throughout the day?

Legal Marshals



Why are they important?

Marshals are focused on collecting the names and contact details for those in arrestable positions who are planning to stay until arrest.

Keeping track of who has been arrested is vital for a range of reasons, but most importantly so that those arrested receive appropriate follow up support. It's also important for updating friends and family, and collecting data on arrests and outcomes to track trends and improve actions.

Am I at risk of being arrested?

This role can carry a slightly higher risk of arrest than observers as marshals tend to be moving among participants in direct actions.

Stay aware of your surroundings and listen to police instructions to identify when the police are about to commence arrests. (a) get out of the way, and (b) warn others who are in an arrestable position. Do your best to collect information but only as far as you are comfortable.

You will be equipped with hi-vis and identified as a marshal, and generally this has been respected by police.

Do I have to talk to the police?

You should not speak with the police, if the police try to speak with you direct their questions to the police liaisons; however, use your judgement to support people in their interactions with police and support others to assert their rights.

Do I need legal experience or knowledge?

You do not need any previous experience, however it is helpful to have a good understanding of some of the basics when it comes to police powers and responsibilities.

What does a legal marshal do?

Collect details from people taking arrestable actions, or take down details of anyone arrested or fined.

- **Ask:** are you planning to stay until arrest? Or are you concerned you may be arrested today?
- **Write** legal support number on people's arms if needed, or the number of a friend or family they can contact later if their phone is taken.
- **Record** the following information:
 - Full name
 - Mobile number
 - Date of birth (if possible - needed to enquire about someone in the watch house later on)
- Time, place and nature of the arrest/s
- Whether there was any use of force that should be followed up.
- Any special notes: do we need to contact a family member for them?
- **Offer** to hold on to anything they may not want to take into the watch house. The police can seize property that may be evidence of an offence. This can include mobile phones.

Throughout the day you should send pictures of your notes to the central communication point. It will be someone's role to update an arrest tracking sheet throughout the day. If any family or friends approach you to ask about a loved one, direct them to the central contact. This sheet will later be used to contact arrestees and provide follow up support which is vital to safe, sustainable actions.