

# Images and footage

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Images and footage can be released where there is a policing purpose for doing so. The release of images and footage must be lawful, necessary and proportionate.

When images and footage are released to the media, they should be accompanied by information on copyright and conditions of use.

Image or footage released to support a criminal investigation must be approved and verified by the senior investigating officer (SIO) or officer-in-charge (OIC). All decisions to release images or footage – and the reasons for doing so – should be recorded, along with any risk assessment, by the SIO or OIC.

Corporate communications departments (CCDs) should have processes to regularly review the publication and appropriate archiving of images and footage on force websites and social media platforms. These processes should be introduced and applied in liaison with relevant business areas.

Adequate safeguards should be in place to ensure the safe transmission of images and footage to avoid data breaches. Chief officers should ensure that a local force policy exists that sets out minimum requirements for this.

For further information, go to:

- [Information Commissioner's Officer guidance on data sharing](#)
- [Information Commissioner's Officer guidance on video surveillance](#)

## Image of wanted person

Where it is considered necessary and proportionate, an SIO or OIC can approve the release of a photograph of a wanted individual. Once the individual is apprehended, the CCD should remove the photograph from the force's channels as soon as possible and inform the media.

## Image of missing person

For missing persons investigations, the OIC should obtain a recent image from family or other personal connections to the missing person.

Where a missing person has previously been in custody, their custody photograph should only be used:

- as a last resort
- where the risk of harm to the missing person is judged to outweigh the risk of using their image by the OIC investigating their missing status

Additional guidance, including risk-assessing the level of information to be released, can be found in the Metropolitan Police Service's [Missing persons media and online publicity guidance](#).

## Tribute image

The family of a deceased person can be asked to provide a photograph to the CCD for release. All images used should be verified by the OIC or family liaison officer (FLO).

## Release of custody images

The police are the legal copyright owner of images and are responsible for releasing an offender's custody photograph.

Where practicable and proportionate, press offices should be prepared to release the image of a person found guilty on the day of conviction, where there is a policing purpose or at the request of the media. This is unless there is a court order or other legitimate reason not to do so.

Press offices should release images on all custodial sentences at the request of the media, unless exceptional reasons exist. Approval and verification processes for the release of images should be agreed locally.

If there are legitimate reasons not to issue the image, the SIO or OIC must provide a rationale, which will be logged by the CCD. This reason should be explained to any requesting media.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of potential exceptional reasons:

- a risk assessment has been completed and release of the image will put the person, their family or their friends at risk of harm
- reporting restrictions are in place that prevent the person's identity from being released
- releasing the image could interfere with other ongoing proceedings, because identity is an issue
- the individual is a juvenile and reporting restrictions have not been lifted
- the individual is a vulnerable adult

## Body-worn video

The police may wish to publish or release body-worn video (BWV) images or footage to the media for a number of reasons. This can include:

- tracing wanted suspects
- locating people who have escaped or absconded from custody
- release of materials under open justice principles
- public reassurance or confidence
- demonstrating police skill or bravery
- educational purposes
- managing misinformation, disinformation or malinformation in relation to a high-profile incident or operation

The decision must be made on a case-by-case basis with early consultation with the CPS, where appropriate. There may be occasions where BWV footage cannot be released due to ongoing investigations or operational sensitivity.

Release of BWV to the media or to the public should follow the [NPCC Body-worn video guidance 2024](#) and the [Safeguarding body-worn video data](#) guidance.

Where the release relates to correcting misinformation, disinformation or malinformation, or a high-profile incident or operation, the decision should be made by the SIO or senior operational officer in consultation with the head of communications. The decision and rationale should be recorded by the officer and head of communications.

In these circumstances, alternative methods to achieve the same aim may also be considered. For example, this may include allowing media or community leaders to view BWV on a non-reportable basis.

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