

Good Practice Guide – Preserving Physical Evidence

In cases where there may be physical evidence of crimes (e.g. physical or sexual assault), **contact the Police immediately**. Ask their advice about what to do to preserve evidence.

As a guide-

- Where possible leave things as and where they are. If anything has to be handled, keep this to an absolute minimum;
- Do not clean up. Do not touch anything you do not have to. Do not throw anything away which could be evidence;
- Do not wash anything or in any way remove fibres, blood etc;
- Preserve the clothing and footwear of the victim;
- Preserve anything used to comfort or warm the victim, e.g. a blanket;
- Note in writing the state of the clothing of both the victim and person alleged to have caused the harm. Note injuries in writing. As soon as possible, make full written notes on the conditions and attitudes of the people involved in the incident;
- Take steps to secure the room or area where the incident took place. Do not allow anyone to enter until the Police arrive.

In addition, in cases of sexual assault –

- Preserve bedding and clothing where appropriate, do not wash;
- Try not to have any personal or physical contact with either the victim or the person alleged to have caused the harm. Offer reassurance and comfort as needed, but be aware that anyone touching the victim or source of risk can cross contaminate evidence.