Police Pursuit

When a situation falls within the definition of Pursuit, officers will need to decide whether a pursuit is justified, proportionate and conforms to the principle of least intrusion. A pursuit may be Spontaneous or a Pre-Planned Operation.

Persons performing any role in Pursuit Management must be properly trained. Drivers must be qualified within the terms of current ACPO approved National Training Standards.

This Authorised Professional Practice (APP) module does not include the pursuit of pedal cycles.

Go to:
- Vehicles used for Pursuit;
- Roles and Responsibilities;
- Communications;
- Cross Border Pursuits;
- The Use of Police Dogs;
- Air Support; and
- Fatal Collisions resulting from Pursuit Activity.
Pursuit

A police driver is deemed to be in pursuit when a driver indicates by their actions or continuance of their manner of driving that they have no intention of stopping for police and the police driver believes that the driver of the subject vehicle is aware of the requirement to stop and decides to continue behind the subject vehicle with a view to either reporting its progress or stopping it.

Spontaneous

When the actions of the suspect driver in deciding to flee are triggered by the presence of a patrolling police vehicle without prior warning or sufficient time for the development of specific strategy and plans, regardless of whether or not the patrolling officer made an initial requirement for the vehicle to stop.
Pursuit Management

When managing pursuits forces should consider:

- the *Initial Authority to Conduct a Pursuit*;
- the *Continued Authority to Pursue*;
- the *Situational Engagement of Suspects*;
- *Pre-planned Operations*;
- *Discontinuing a Pursuit*; and
- having briefing and debriefing protocols in place and appointing an individual to be responsible for recording and *Analysing all Pursuits*.

### Analysing all Pursuits

Notes should be made of decisions and actions taken during all pursuits and any conclusions reached during debriefings. The analysis should include a review of:

- Operational outcomes;
- Good practice (submitted to the Pursuit Working Group);
- Compliance with this Authorised Professional Practice. (APP); and
- Impact upon an individual’s human rights.
Initial Authority to Conduct a Pursuit

Before requesting or granting Authorisation for a Pursuit, it must be decided if subsequent investigative action may be a preferred option to pursuit. There are a number of Pursuit Considerations which drivers and Control/Communications Room Staff must consider in this decision making process.

Granting authority to pursue gives agreement in principle to use tactics set out in the Tactics Directory with the exception of those which require authority from a senior officer.

Officers should convey information to the control/communications room regarding their own driving authority level, the police vehicle they are using, a description of the subject vehicle and occupants and the direction of travel.

Non-pursuit trained drivers and motorcyclists, where permitted by their force to stop vehicles, must immediately inform the control/communications room of the circumstances when it becomes evident a vehicle is refusing to stop. At this point the situation falls within the definition of Pursuit and non-pursuit trained drivers must immediately discontinue.

Initial Phase Trained Drivers and Motorcyclists must immediately inform the control/communications room of the circumstances when it becomes evident that a vehicle is refusing to stop. Authority to continue will be sought and, if granted, the driver may pursue in the Initial Phase only.

Tactical Phase Trained Advanced Drivers must immediately inform the control/communications room of the circumstances when it becomes evident a pursuit has commenced and seek authority to continue.
Authorisation for a Pursuit

Officers should seek approval for their decision to engage in a pursuit from designated control/communications room personnel. The time available between recognising the need for action and the deadline for taking that action may be too short to acquire the control/communications room authorisation. In such cases officers may self authorise and justify the decision at a later time.

Initial Phase

This is a spontaneous pursuit in the period before tactical resolution can be considered and actioned. Standard/response drivers/motorcyclists with suitable vehicles may be authorised to continue by an appropriate member of control/communications room staff but has no authority to take an active part in tactical resolution. Tyre deflation systems may be used in the initial phase.
Pursuit Considerations

Pursuit considerations are taken in accordance with the National Decision Making Model. Pursuit considerations include:

1. the current level of risk taking by the pursued driver;
2. whether or not the suspect’s identity is known;
3. the seriousness of any known offence committed or suspected;
4. the weight of intelligence as to whether the suspects are, or are likely to be, armed (see Situational Engagement of Suspects);
5. whether the driver is, or appears to be, a juvenile or whether it appears other vulnerable person(s) may be carried in the vehicle;
6. the type of vehicle pursued, eg, car, motorcycle etc;
7. the current/anticipated route as regards time of day, road, weather, traffic or specific considerations such as schools, licensed premises or off road terrain etc; and
8. the availability of Tactical Options.

It is essential drivers possess a sound knowledge of the considerations as many short duration pursuits may not allow time for specific guidance from the control/communications room.

There will be cases where information regarding one or more of the pursuit considerations may be unavailable, or one or more of the considerations for continuance are not met. Such situations should not automatically preclude the authorisation or continuance of a Pursuit. Each pursuit must be considered on the information and intelligence at hand and measured against the considerations collectively.

Decisions should be documented along with a rationale.
Continued Authority to Pursue

Any changes to the dynamic risk assessment must be immediately reported to the control/ communications room. If this process highlights increased risk, the issue of proportionality must be reconsidered and current authorities reviewed.

On receipt of updated information, an appropriately trained member of Control/ Communications Room Staff will make an immediate decision whether to allow continuation of the pursuit. Decisions must be relayed to the police driver and recorded.

Forces must have Tactical Options available for the resolution of a pursuit. Pursuits will not be authorised in the absence of tactical options for resolution.

When a subject vehicle has been re-sighted following a temporary loss the authority in place will be deemed to be continuous for the resumption of that pursuit following an updated Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA). This should be communicated to the control/ communications room immediately.

Where a pursuit has been discontinued or where a vehicle has been lost, it is necessary for a new authority based on the latest intelligence and circumstances to be in place to pursue again.
Tactical Options

A Tactics Directory has been published alongside this Authorised Professional Practice (APP) and contains a menu of tactical options for pursuit prevention and resolution.

Each force should ensure that the tactics approved for use in their area are formally risk assessed and represent a proportionate response to any set of circumstances their officers may encounter.

It is recognised that Pre-Emptive, preventative and resolution tactics will develop and evolve over time. Forces should add value to the Tactics Directory by feeding information regarding tactical innovation and improvement to ACPO through the National Police Driving Schools Conference.

Pre-Emptive

Officers may find themselves behind suspect vehicles and drivers in the normal flow of traffic. The driver of the suspect vehicle may remain unaware of the police interest or decide to continue driving normally in the hope the officer’s presence is coincidental. During this period, there is time to consider the use of preventative and pre-emptive tactics. Where preventative or pre-emptive actions are clearly proportionate to the intelligence available, their use will be preferable to pursuit.
Situational Engagement of Suspects

**Off-Road Pursuits**
Will be managed in exactly the same way as any other pursuit, and will be subject to the same dynamic risk assessment (DRA) and communication requirements.

Officers are advised to carefully consider the issue of proportionality and the likelihood of damage to vehicles before embarking on a pursuit off-road.

**Quad Bikes and Motorcycles**
Engagement is identified as high risk because of the vulnerability of riders, the manoeuvrability of the vehicle and the excessive speeds that such vehicles can reach. Exceptional Circumstances may, however dictate that the tactics identified in the Tactics Directory could be the best option for use against motorcycles or quads.

**Armed Suspects**
Unarmed officers should not be used to terminate a pursuit if there is intelligence to suggest that the occupants of a subject vehicle are, or are likely to be, armed. If the situation arises:

- the incident must be declared an armed pursuit.
- advice from a Firearms Tactical Advisor must be sought;
- advice from an Airwave Tactical Advisor must be sought;
- the firearms advisor should always take the lead;
- any tactical resolution proposed by the Firearms Tactical Advisor should, where possible, comply with the Home Office (2011) Code of Practice on the Management of Police Pursuits; and
- firearms tactics should be used in line with current Firearms Authorised Professional Practice (APP) and force policies.
Exceptional Circumstances

Are those which have the clear potential for grave consequences. They will be most likely to involve immediate risk to life, significant levels of damage to property/infrastructure, or issues of national security.
Pre-Planned Operations

If the proposed future actions of the police carry a foreseeable risk of Pursuit and there has been time to develop strategy, identify tactics and produce contingency plans, any such pursuit will be regarded as a pre-planned operation.

The degree of pre-planning and the depth of preparation will be dependant upon the length of time available before engagement or the distance a vehicle is followed before suspects become aware of police presence and a pursuit ensues.

Tactical advice should always be sought in the planning process for operations with a foreseeable risk of pursuit. Options to prevent the pursuit developing and use of Air Support should be primary considerations in formulation of that plan.

Additional advice regarding Unattended Suspect Vehicles can be found in the Tactics Directory.
Discontinuing a Pursuit

The decision to discontinue a pursuit can be made by:

- occupants of assigned vehicles; and
- Control/ Communications Room Staff.

Tactical Advisors, Police Aircraft Observers, and local divisional supervisors are among a wider group of people who may be in a position to advise a pursuit be discontinued due to knowledge or observation of local circumstances.

Staff must discontinue a pursuit as soon as risk becomes disproportionate to the known reasons for undertaking it or where no tactics are available.

Once a pursuit has been discontinued:

- all relevant information must be recorded;
- all involved ground units and authorities will disengage and where applicable turn off emergency equipment and resume normal patrol speeds;
- incident data recorders should be manually activated (where fitted); and
- authorities, including those for deployment tactics, are automatically withdrawn.

Any decision to discontinue the deployment of air support is a separate issue from the decision to withdrawn ground units.
Vehicles used for Pursuit

Vehicles considered suitable for the Initial Phase include:

- marked cars: fitted with visual and audible warning equipment which have been deemed suitable for use in pursuit;
- unmarked cars fitted with audible and visual warning equipment driven by Tactical Phase Trained Advanced Drivers and deemed fit for use in Tactical Phase; and
- police response motorcycles fitted with audible and visual warning equipment.

Vehicles considered suitable for the tactical phase include:

- marked cars: fitted with visual and audible warning equipment which have been deemed fit for use in tactical phase pursuit;
- unmarked cars fitted with audible and visual warning equipment driven by tactical phase trained advanced drivers deemed fit for use in tactical phase pursuit (forces should consider replacing unmarked vehicles with suitably marked vehicles at the earliest opportunity due to limitations with unmarked vehicles engaged in pursuit).

All vehicles that are likely to be involved in pursuits should be equipped with a radio system capable of communicating with the control/communications room and Recording Real Time Evidence.

Consideration should be given to Prohibited Vehicles.

Tactical Phase

An authorised pursuit for which resolution tactics are appropriate and available which has commenced, or taken over by, a tactical phase trained advanced driver in a suitable vehicle, and a Pursuit Commander has been identified.

Once the pursuit moves into the Tactical Phase, tactical options for bringing the pursuit to a conclusion will be decided.
Prohibited Vehicles

The use of vehicles with larger people carrying capacity such as personnel carriers and unmarked vehicles which do not have audible and visual warning equipment fitted, including hired or personal vehicles, and motorcycles ridden by non-response level motorcyclists, has a clear and foreseeable potential to increase dangers associated with vehicle pursuit. The use of such vehicles for pursuit is prohibited.

In forces where Chief Officers deem it operationally necessary to use specific vehicles, use should be formally risk assessed with written documentation available for inspection.
Recording Real Time Evidence

All those involved in a pursuit must consider the need to provide evidence of:

- any criminal activities occurring during the Pursuit; and
- the decision making processes involved in conducting the pursuit at the Initial Phase, together with any further decisions to allow the continuance of a pursuit.

It is highly desirable to use vehicles with Incident Data Recorders (IDR) and visual recording equipment in pursuit situations for evidential purposes and, whenever available, such vehicles should be deployed to take part in pursuits.

Where police vehicles are fitted with visual recording equipment it must:

- be properly maintained and used during pursuits and emergency response;
- not be switched off prior to or during pursuit activities; and
- be in working order; if not force reporting procedures should be followed and repairs undertaken at the earliest opportunity.

If a pursuit ends in a serious collision accurate information will need to be available for investigators. The actions of the police drivers are a focal point of post incident investigations. Accounts from the driver, passenger, and independent witnesses are vital to investigations, as are traditional techniques and findings of Collision Reconstruction Units.
Incident Data Recorders (IDR)

The value of the accuracy and inherent independence of information automatically recorded by retro fit dedicated IDR is of great value to investigators of post pursuit incidents. Forces should work towards a situation where all operational vehicles used in pursuit and response situations are fitted with IDR type devices.

Advice offered by the Pursuit Tactical Advisor should also be recorded for future reference using control/ communications room voice recording systems and/or in other forms of official computer or paper systems such as incident logs and pocket note books.
Roles and Responsibilities

Staff likely to have a role in pursuits should have undergone appropriate Training be and aware of the Airwave Communication Methodology.

Key roles for police pursuits include:

- Initial Phase Trained Drivers and Motorcyclists;
- Tactical Phase Trained Advanced Drivers;
- Pursuit Commander;
- Radio Operator (See Communications);
- Control/ Communications Room Staff;
- Control/ Communications Room Supervisor; and
- Pursuit Tactical Advisor.
Training

Staff involved in pursuit, including Pursuit Tactical Advisors and Air Support must be trained and authorised in line with ACPO approved National Training Standards. Competence should be recorded in driver training documentation. Training includes dealing with ‘Red Mist’ and developing a positive Attitude during pursuits.

Police drivers should not be authorised to pursue if they are unable to reach the required level of competence.

Staff involved in the management of pursuits must receive refresher training every 3 - 5 years.
Initial Phase Trained Drivers and Motorcyclists

Must follow Initial Authorisation to Conduct Pursuit procedure and request Tactical Phase Trained Advanced Drivers to assist.

The control/communications room may direct initial phase trained drivers and motorcyclists to support a pursuing vehicle; in order for the resource to assist at the stop or abandonment of the subject vehicle.

During the Initial Phase, initial phase trained drivers and motorcyclists must:

- convey information regarding the circumstances and direction of the pursuit, so that Control/Communications Room Staff can properly organise and deploy appropriate resources;
- risk assess the situation and provide information to the control/communications room regarding the Pursuit Considerations;
- drive in accordance with their level of authority, personal capability, avoiding increased risk; and
- pass control to a tactical phase trained advanced driver as soon as possible.

Initial phase trained drivers and motorcyclists must not become involved in any vehicular attempt to stop the subject vehicle in a pursuit. This does not preclude suitably qualified and authorised officers from deploying tyre deflation systems and/ or acting as a feeder vehicle (motorcycles must not be used as feeder vehicles).
Tactical Phase Trained Advanced Drivers

Have the same responsibilities as [Initial Phase Trained Drivers and Motorcyclists](#) and are also responsible for:

- dynamically risk assessing the pursuit and providing accurate information to the control/communications room;
- identifying themselves or a suitably qualified radio operator as pursuit commander, once appropriately placed;
- driving in accordance with training and personal capabilities to manage risk levels; and
- requesting additional resources and suggesting tactical options as appropriate.

**Pursuit Commander**

Is an appropriate officer within one of the pursuing tactical phase vehicles, responsible for the execution of tactics and maintaining communication during the management of a pursuit. This role is not rank based and will be undertaken by the person most appropriately placed and equipped to make necessary tactical decisions. The Pursuit Commander should clearly identify themselves as such to all other officers engaged in the pursuit and to the control/communications room.
Control/ Communications Room Staff

Are responsible for:

- locating the appropriate talk groups on dispatcher terminals and being aware of the patching procedures;
- coordinating radio communications during the pursuit;
- informing the Control/ Communications Room Supervisor of the start of a pursuit at the earliest opportunity;
- approving initial and continued authority for pursuit at the earliest opportunity, if a supervisor is not immediately available;
- constantly risk assessing activity based on information and intelligence received;
- identify and assign a Tactical Phase Trained Advanced Drivers in a suitable vehicle to take the Pursuit Commander role where a Initial Phase Trained Drivers and Motorcyclists has initiated a pursuit;
- declaring a pursuit is in the tactical phase, where appropriate (and only after the pursuit commander has been identified and agreed);
- mobilising, deploying and coordinating resources in support of those directly engaged;
- identifying, advising and guiding deploying and controlling units (including air support) during the pursuit; and
- receiving and recording all incoming information from the pursuing vehicle including the reasons leading to the taking of a particular action and, where applicable, any other options considered;
Control/ Communications Room Supervisor

In addition to providing support and advice to the operator engaged with the pursuit, the control/ communications room supervisor is responsible for:

- the overall control of the pursuit;
- constantly risk assessing the activity based on information and intelligence received;
- approving initial and continued authority for pursuit, at the earliest opportunity;
- ensuring that a **Tactical Phase Trained Advanced Drivers** in a suitable vehicle has been assigned to a pursuit and can respond within a time frame that balances operational need with the potential for harm, where a **Initial Phase Trained Drivers and Motorcyclists** has been authorised to conduct initial phase pursuit;
- identifying and agreeing a **Pursuit Commander**;
- declaring a pursuit is in the tactical phase, where appropriate (and only after the pursuit commander has been identified and agreed);
- considering the current level of authority in light of incoming information (dynamic risk assessment process, and sources of intelligence) and advice from an appointed **Pursuit Tactical Advisor**;
- ordering additional units to assist, if necessary; and
- suggesting the range of tactical options available to the pursuing driver/pursuit commander in the circumstances surrounding the pursuit.

A control/ communication room supervisor should also ensure that forces are notified when a pursuit is approaching force boundaries and provide information regarding any tactical authorities previously given and current.
Pursuit Tactical Advisor

Has sufficient operational experience of pursuit situations to be able to dynamically interpret policy and advise a course of action to be taken by persons currently involved in a pursuit. Under no circumstances should the Tactical Advisor be a person directly involved as a crew-member in a pursuing vehicle, the first line communicator or the managing control/ communications room supervisor. Forces should clearly identify persons deemed suitable to act as Pursuit Tactical Advisors and ensure there is 24 hour operational availability.

Tactical advice may be provided in real-time as part of the communications loop using personal force radio equipment or as part of the control/ communications room based team managing the event.

Specific tasks for the Tactical Advisor during a Spontaneous pursuit will be to:

- provide advice to Pursuit Commanders and/ or Control/ Communications Room Staff during a pursuit;
- work with Firearms Tactical Advisors during armed pursuits;
- provide operational support to crews of pursuing police vehicles;
- monitor incoming commentary; and
- consider the range of Tactical Options available, and make suggestions.

Specific tasks for the Tactical Advisor during a Pre-Planned Operation will be:

- to take part in the operational planning process;
- assist the decision making process;
- to provide input in the preparation of any documented risk assessment;
- to suggest the range of tactical options available; and
- where time constraints allow, be present in the control/ communications room during the operation to assist staff.
Communications

All pursuits must be controlled through a force control/ communications room or equivalent.

Only plain language and [Nationally Agreed Terms](#) should be used in radio transmissions and commentaries.

Double-crewed vehicles should be used if available. Where vehicles involved in pursuits are double-crewed, the police driver is free to concentrate on their driving and tactic development, whilst the radio operator delivers the information required to other participants and control/ communications rooms by verbal commentary.

Where more than one vehicle is engaged in a pursuit and the second vehicle is double crewed, it may be advantageous for that vehicle to provide the commentary, thus allowing the crew of the first vehicle to concentrate on the actual pursuit.

Decisions and actions should be included in the commentary and be recorded with control/ communications room voice recording facilities.
Cross Border Pursuits

When a pursuit is close to a force boundary, the adjoining force should be informed at the earliest opportunity. The authority to continue or discontinue the pursuit will transfer to appropriate Control/Communications Room Staff of the new force as soon as the boundary is crossed.

The use of tactics will not automatically be transferred and will be for the receiving force to make decisions regarding continuance of that authority.

Appropriate protocols should be in place to address these circumstances.

The Use of Police Dogs

Consideration should be given to the deployment of a dog unit at an early stage to remain within the locality of a pursuit, in order that the resource may be in a position to deploy rapidly at the stop or abandonment of the subject vehicle.

Once a location has been selected for the stop, particularly when using tyre deflation systems, the advantage of deploying a dog unit directly to the area must not be overlooked.

Dog units must not be directly involved in the pursuit unless they meet the criteria laid down for involvement as either Initial Phase Trained Drivers and Motorcyclists or Tactical Phase Trained Advanced Drivers in a suitable vehicle.
Air Support

Wherever possible, and at the earliest opportunity, air support should be deployed in pursuit situations.

Air support offers the police a valuable and effective operational option which reduces potential dangers by:

- allowing ground units to increase the distance between themselves and the subject vehicle, thus reduces pressure in the mind of the suspect driver as he/she makes decisions; and
- vastly reducing the perception on the part of the driver that continued risk taking can be successful.

Air support can assist with pursuit commentary.

Air support is not considered to be ‘in pursuit’ of the subject vehicle or occupants.

If a pursuit is discontinued air support will not automatically be withdrawn. The aircrew may continue to gather evidence by monitoring the progress and behaviour of the subject vehicle and its occupants.
Fatal Collisions Resulting from Pursuit Activity

Where a fatal or life changing injury has occurred from a police pursuit, an investigation of the circumstances should be carried out (please see Module 2: Fatal Collisions).

Within this investigation it will be necessary to state:

- Why the pursuit was undertaken and what alternatives (if available) were declined;
- What the objectives of the pursuit were;
- Feasible options at various stages of the incident;
- Decisions reached;
- Outcome and learning points from debriefs.

At the completion of a pursuit there should be a review of the outcomes.