Police Use of Force – 2

Use of Handcuffs

All Nottinghamshire Police Officers are trained and equipped with rigid handcuffs. The design of these handcuffs makes them easier to apply to a subject who is resisting control attempts.

The use of handcuffs by Police Officers is a use of force and their use must be documented and accounted for. They must be used in line with legislation governing use of force (see ‘Police Use of Force – 1’ fact sheet) and the officer must have objective grounds for justifying the use of handcuffs on a subject.

The principle rationale for the use of handcuffs is to prevent a subject escaping or attempting to escape, or to prevent violence to the officer or other persons. The officer must have objective grounds in formulating their belief that the use of handcuffs is necessary, but need not wait for a physical act to occur.

In most circumstances where handcuffs are used, the subject will be arrested, but there are some occasions, where legislation allows for force to be used if necessary, where a subject is not under arrest.

In the majority of cases that handcuffs are applied, the subject will be handcuffed to the rear. This is due to the position affording the officer a greater degree of safety.

Handcuffs should be applied for no longer than is reasonably necessary. Invariably, handcuffs will be removed from a detained person when in custody. Only in exceptional circumstances will their continued use be appropriate.

Due to the metal fabrication of the handcuffs, the application can leave marks around a subject’s wrists. These will quite often manifest in indentation lines where the handcuffs are positioned. There may be slight reddening around this area which will in most cases disappear within a short time.

Where a subject resists handcuff application, injuries such as cuts and grazing, along with temporary nerve pain can be caused. This is normal and the risk of these additional injuries can be mitigated by not struggling or resisting.