

Cruising and cottaging: your safety and the law



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This factsheet tells you how the law applies to cottaging and cruising. It gives suggestions on keeping safe and what to do if you are a victim of a crime. It also gives suggestions to avoid problems with the police.

Cruising Grounds

Are open spaces where men look for consensual sex with other men, such as parks or lay-bys.

Cottaging

is looking for or having sex in a public toilet.

Cruising And The Law

There is no specific law against cruising. Sex in public places is legal as long as it is not likely to be visible to other people. This includes sex late at night in a secluded area of a park. Sex that is visible to other members of the public could be illegal though.

Being Discreet

Be considerate of other visitors to outdoor spaces. Use secluded areas that are not overlooked from a road or path. Avoid sex during daylight. Don't leave sex litter. Inconsiderate behaviour can draw complaints and unwanted attention.

Cottaging and the law

Sex in public toilets is always illegal. That means cottaging can get you arrested, whether you are discreet or not. There are less risky ways of meeting people in saunas or through websites and apps. If you still go cottaging, bear in mind that police or others sometimes patrol toilets.

Action by the police

Police guidelines say they should not unfairly target cruisers. However, the police may visit cruising grounds in response to homophobic attacks or complaints about sexual activity. If a police officer stops you to ask questions or give you information, they should do so in a respectful way.

If you're arrested

You could be arrested if you're seen having sex in a visible public place or in a public toilet. If arrested, always accept the police's offer to find a lawyer to represent you for free. Make sure you have a lawyer with you before being interviewed or accepting a caution. Getting a caution or conviction means having a criminal record, which your employer will hear about if you need a criminal record check for your job.

Your safety

- You are never responsible for any violence or abuse you might experience
- Look out for yourself and other people
- If you see an attack, alert others and get to safety
- If something doesn't feel right, trust your instincts and leave
- Think about keeping valuables out of sight or leaving them at home
- Know where the exits are and don't become isolated
- You always have the right to say no to sex and to change your mind at any time



Reporting an incident

If you see or experience an attack, it's important to tell someone. In an emergency, call the police on 999. You don't need to give your name if you prefer not to. Alternatively, you can contact Galop. We give confidential advice. You can also ask us to pass anonymous information to the police.

Useful contacts

Galop - Advice and support on hate crime, sexual assault, cruising and the law - 020 7704 2040 - www.galop.org.uk

Terrence Higgins Trust - Advice and support on sexual health - 0808 802 1221 - www.tht.org.uk

The Police - Emergency 999 –
Non-emergency 101

Always dial 999 if it is an emergency and you think you are in immediate danger.