# Child Q case exposes systemic failures and racial bias in police strip searches of children



A deeply troubling case involving the strip search of a 15-year-old Black schoolgirl known as Child Q has cast a harsh spotlight on police practices in England, exposing significant failings in safeguarding vulnerable children. The incident, which occurred in a Hackney school in east London in 2020, saw two officers from the Metropolitan Police strip-search the girl while she was on her period, after she was wrongly suspected of carrying cannabis. A recent disciplinary tribunal found the two officers guilty of gross misconduct and dismissed them without notice, while a third officer received a final written warning for misconduct. Child Q, who has spoken through a solicitor, described the traumatic experience as one that leaves her unable to “go a single day without wanting to scream,” underscoring the profound psychological impact of the invasive and mishandled search.

The search took place without the presence of an appropriate adult, a fundamental safeguard designed to protect children in such vulnerable situations. This breach, alongside other procedural failures, was highlighted during the tribunal, in which one of the officers admitted not having completed crucial training on search procedures and being unaware of the requirement for an appropriate adult to be present. The victim's mother expressed a mixture of relief at the outcome of the tribunal and frustration, insisting that the Metropolitan Police still faces a substantial challenge to regain the trust of Black Londoners. The Metropolitan Police issued a formal apology, with a senior commander describing the event as "truly regrettable" and acknowledging the damage caused to confidence in the police among Black communities.

This incident is symptomatic of wider systemic issues regarding police strip searches of children across England and Wales. Recent data reported by the Children’s Commissioner revealed that between July 2022 and June 2023, there were 457 strip searches conducted on children, averaging one every 19 hours. Nearly half of these cases resulted in no further action, raising serious questions about the justification for such intrusive measures. The report also highlighted a stark racial disparity: Black children are four times more likely to be subjected to strip searches than their peers. This disproportionate targeting ties into broader concerns that Black children are often perceived by law enforcement as older and less vulnerable than they are, a perception that risks exacerbating trauma and injustice.

In response to the ongoing fallout from Child Q’s case and similar instances, independent investigators found the officers acted inappropriately, with disciplinary hearings citing both procedural failures and discrimination based on race and sex. The Metropolitan Police pledged to address the overuse of strip search powers and promised significant procedural reforms. Yet, children’s charities and safeguarding experts remain alarmed by the frequency and conditions under which these searches occur. A leading children’s charity chief executive described the prevalence of such searches, especially without proper safeguarding, as "deeply worrying" and emphasised the necessity for policing to prioritise respect and safety to maintain young people's trust in the justice system.

The case of Child Q thus exposes not only individual failings among officers but also entrenched institutional problems within policing practices around vulnerable children, particularly those from Black communities. The trauma inflicted on Child Q and the broader patterns of disproportionate and invasive searches point to an urgent need for systemic change, including stricter oversight, mandatory training, and the firm assurance that children are protected from unnecessary and harmful interventions. This incident’s aftermath serves as a stark reminder of the potential damage that can arise when policing powers are misused or applied without sufficient regard for the rights and dignity of young people.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/child-q-strip-search-met-police-b2778080.html), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jun/03/black-schoolgirl-child-q-strip-searched-by-met-officers-suffered-mental-harm-hearing-told)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/child-q-strip-search-met-police-b2778080.html), [[3]](https://www.itv.com/news/london/2025-06-16/officer-involved-in-strip-search-of-child-apologises-for-distress), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/london/2025-06-11/officer-who-strip-searched-black-schoolgirl-admits-failings), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jun/03/black-schoolgirl-child-q-strip-searched-by-met-officers-suffered-mental-harm-hearing-told)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/child-q-strip-search-met-police-b2778080.html), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/british-police-criticised-over-child-strip-search-failings-2024-08-19/), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jun/03/black-schoolgirl-child-q-strip-searched-by-met-officers-suffered-mental-harm-hearing-told)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/child-q-strip-search-met-police-b2778080.html), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/sep/14/four-met-officers-face-disciplinary-hearings-over-schoolgirl-strip-search), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jun/03/black-schoolgirl-child-q-strip-searched-by-met-officers-suffered-mental-harm-hearing-told)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/child-q-strip-search-met-police-b2778080.html), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/british-police-criticised-over-child-strip-search-failings-2024-08-19/), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jun/03/black-schoolgirl-child-q-strip-searched-by-met-officers-suffered-mental-harm-hearing-told)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/child-q-strip-search-met-police-b2778080.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/british-police-criticised-over-child-strip-search-failings-2024-08-19/> - A report by the Children's Commissioner revealed that between July 2022 and June 2023, police in England and Wales conducted 457 strip searches on children, averaging one every 19 hours. The majority were related to suspected drug offences, with nearly half resulting in no further action. The report also highlighted that Black children were four times more likely to be strip-searched compared to the general population. The Children's Commissioner called for a higher threshold before subjecting children to such invasive searches. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/british-police-criticised-over-child-strip-search-failings-2024-08-19/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/london/2025-06-16/officer-involved-in-strip-search-of-child-apologises-for-distress> - PC Wray, one of the officers involved in the strip search of Child Q, admitted that the search 'should have never happened' and expressed deep regret for the distress caused. She acknowledged multiple failings, including not obtaining proper authorisation and failing to ensure an appropriate adult was present during the search. The misconduct hearing revealed that PC Wray had not completed essential training on search procedures and was unaware of the requirement for an appropriate adult during such searches. ([itv.com](https://www.itv.com/news/london/2025-06-16/officer-involved-in-strip-search-of-child-apologises-for-distress?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/sep/14/four-met-officers-face-disciplinary-hearings-over-schoolgirl-strip-search> - Following an investigation by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), four Metropolitan Police officers faced disciplinary hearings over the strip-search of Child Q. The IOPC found that the search was inappropriate, lacked proper authorisation, and was conducted without an appropriate adult present. The officers were also accused of discrimination based on race and sex. The Metropolitan Police acknowledged overuse of strip-search powers and committed to implementing significant improvements in their procedures. ([theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/sep/14/four-met-officers-face-disciplinary-hearings-over-schoolgirl-strip-search?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/london/2025-06-11/officer-who-strip-searched-black-schoolgirl-admits-failings> - Trainee Detective Constable Kristina Linge admitted to several failings during the strip search of Child Q, including not ensuring an appropriate adult was present and not conducting a less intrusive search first. She acknowledged that the search should not have occurred and caused harm and distress to Child Q. However, she denied that her actions were discriminatory. The misconduct panel is considering whether her actions amounted to gross misconduct. ([itv.com](https://www.itv.com/news/london/2025-06-11/officer-who-strip-searched-black-schoolgirl-admits-failings?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jun/03/black-schoolgirl-child-q-strip-searched-by-met-officers-suffered-mental-harm-hearing-told> - The misconduct hearing for the officers involved in the strip search of Child Q was informed that the incident caused significant mental harm to the 15-year-old Black schoolgirl. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) argued that the officers' actions were disproportionate and led to harm to Child Q's mental health. The IOPC also highlighted concerns about the treatment of Black children by police, noting that they are more likely to be treated as older and less vulnerable than their white peers. ([theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jun/03/black-schoolgirl-child-q-strip-searched-by-met-officers-suffered-mental-harm-hearing-told?utm_source=openai))