

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?  
OHM  
FILLTHBUSTERS





# WHO YOU GONNA CALL? FILTHBUSTERS!! ALTERNATIVES TO CALLING THE POLICE

These are stressful times. Everyone is on tenterhooks and the stresses about our own health, our elderly relatives, our own and others' economic situation, the government's outrageous incompetence and the racialised harm that's resulting, and more generally the uncertainty over the future is putting everyone on edge. Lockdown means we are all living in each others' pockets which can easily lead to us rubbing each other up the wrong way. Mutual aid groups on facebook are full of people asking for police intervention when others ignore social distancing guidelines in the park, on the high street or in the shop. Perhaps we get annoyed when our neighbours play loud music or perhaps more serious issues emerge, like domestic violence or violence in the street. Often a logical response seems to be to call the police and have them sort it out, to 'restore order'. This pamphlet suggests that calling the police is not the answer, and gives several alternative strategies for dealing with the problems of the everyday under the pandemic.

*who you gonna call? filthbusters*  
east london version, june 2020.

property is theft! who you gonna call?  
all your comrades, to distribute this zine!  
thanks and solidarity!  
the filthbusters collective

get involved, join us, adapt the guide for  
your area: [filthbusters@protonmail.com](mailto:filthbusters@protonmail.com)

## WHY NOT CALL THE COPS?

Calling the police often escalates situations, puts people at risk, and leads to violence. Anytime you seek help from the police, you're inviting them into your community and putting people who may already be vulnerable into dangerous situations. For example, black members of the community are more likely to be physically abused by the police. 13 in every 10,000 Black Londoners are tasered, compared with three in every 10,000 white Londoners, and they are more likely to face violent 'restraint' and stop and search harassment, a risk that has increased recently under changes initiated by the Home Secretary which made it easier to stop and search young persons.

## RE-WRITING THE SCRIPT

Most white people have been taught, however subconsciously, that the police are there to keep you safe. Sometimes it looks like they do. But who they keep safe is partial, and that comes at the expense of others being targeted, most prominently Black people! The way in which people rely on the police needs a re-write; we can look after each other - all of us - without putting already more vulnerable people at risk.

Sometimes people feel that calling the police is the only way to deal with problems. But we can build on existing and new networks of mutual aid that allow us to better handle conflicts ourselves and move toward forms of transformative justice, while keeping police away from our neighbourhoods, and standing up for those who are routinely abused by the police.

Below you will find a variety of techniques that you could use in a variety of situations, from the 'hot' to the relatively calm. Whatever you do, look out for your and your community's safety and physical and mental wellbeing.



## GENERAL TECHNIQUES

What you can do of course depends on your own skills and resources as well as the situation. For example being a trained social worker makes it easier to engage with people and if you do boxing or muay thai you may feel more confident physically intervening in a situation. But there is something everyone can do and as you practice you learn how to do so more effectively. And why not try out some of these scenarios as role plays with your friends/housemates?

### Talk to people and find out what's going on for them

As a first step, try to find out what's happening and what (if anything!) is needed. Observe the situation, have a look around you, listen to what people are saying, look at their facial expressions. Consider the risks, to yourself and others. Often the best course of action is to do nothing. If/when you feel this is a situation you want to, and can, engage with, open the conversation - a simple 'hello' can do to start. 'How's it going?' or 'Are you alright?' may be suitable in many situations. Try to keep a calm and friendly tone of voice. Ask open questions and wait for people to respond fully. Therapist-type responses like 'I hear you're upset/angry/frustrated' may be useful when emotions run high and can stop them escalating.

Sometimes, starting a conversation is all it takes for the heat of the moment to diffuse, for people to snap out of whatever funk they were in, and to create space to consider other options for resolving whatever is going on. Your intervention may be pressing the pause button on an active situation that allows people to take a moment to stand back and reconsider their next move. Sometimes, this is all it takes. Also, depending on the sort of situation, your intervention may distract an attacker momentarily, allowing a victim to get away. Be sure to check in with the victim afterwards if you can.

### Self-defence, intervention

There are many videos online on how to defend yourself or someone else, many of these videos are based on martial arts like aikido and contain some simple tricks that work even if the attacker is much larger and stronger than you. If you've got housemates then why not practice (gently!) with them. **Solstar** offer online boxing training.

### How to de-escalate a situation

On how to de-escalate a situation with words there's a few videos **like this one**, simply search for 'de-escalation' training. The main thing is to stay calm and manage your own emotions, so as not to get carried away yourself. If someone is out of control with anger and it looks like they may kick off, don't tell someone "you just need to calm down" because that does not work and may have the opposite effect. The first step to de-escalation is to validate that person's feelings (which is not the same as saying, for example, that you agree with what they are saying or maybe about to do, etc.) - so you could say, "you sound really angry right now". You validate until you sense that they feel validated. After this you help the person figure out options as to what they could do next. The idea is to offer alternatives to the harmful options they may have been focussing on. Then, once you have laid out those options, you can tell them, whatever option you choose, that is your free will. The idea there is that at this point you will find the simple but powerful experience of being really listened to is often enough to calm someone down to the point that they are not a danger to themselves or anyone else.

### Filming the police

If you see someone being harassed by the police there are additional things you can do - see below under "When you see the police harassing someone", and this **BLMUK guide**.

## De-arresting someone

If your friend is being arrested, there are some techniques for trying to de-arrest them. Doing so you obviously put yourself at risk of getting arrested as well (and possibly making things worse for them) so you need to make a judgment as to when is the right situation to do this. Have a look at [this website](#) for inspiration.

## Scenarios:

### Domestic violence: ongoing/live situation

What do you do when you hear a violent argument next door and it's clear someone is being harmed? Unless you believe someone's life is in immediate danger, or if the person under attack asks you to do so, do not call the police. Remember that police can escalate domestic violence situations.

You can support friends and neighbours who are being victimized by abusers by offering them a place to stay, a ride to a safe location, or to watch their children. Utilize community resources like safe houses and hotlines. You can leave numbers to support services in places where you think people might see them. You can agree code words they can use when they phone you that signal that they need your intervention. Do not contact or confront the abuser! this will normally be counterproductive or even dangerous as the abuser will often blame his victim for exposing him.

The freephone, 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline **0808 2000 247**  
**Women's Aid online chat** support (Mon - Fri, 10am - 12pm)  
Hackney domestic and sexual violence support - **020 8356 4458 / 020 8356 4459 / 0800 056 0905** (free from a landline) or email them at [dais@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:dais@hackney.gov.uk)  
Children: **Project 17** (for families with no recourse to public funds\*)  
The Men's Advice Line: Support for male victims of domestic violence, call **0808 8010327**  
**Respect:** Support and advice for perpetrators of domestic violence as well as male victims of domestic violence  
**Sex Workers Collective** support

## Domestic violence: Aftermath/survivor

What do you do when you see your neighbour and she looks hurt/tells you about domestic violence? You can again recommend they contact the domestic violence organisations listed above, where they can find out about refuges and other support.

Your neighbour may need medical help, and for this you can call **111**. If they need emergency contraception you can buy a morning after pill (which can be taken up to 5 days after, depending on the type, at £15-35) without prescription from most pharmacies. The sexual health/abortion services of the local hospitals remain open during the Covid-19 crisis.

For further advice, see [NHS abortion conditions](#)

## Houseless people

Local authorities are supposed to house homeless folk during the coronavirus crisis (and, to be frank, all the time!). Nevertheless there are a lot of people still sleeping rough. If someone asks for money, and if you have some to spare, give them some. Check your own bias before offering to buy them a sandwich instead: you are effectively telling them you don't trust them to spend their money wisely!

Tell people about Streets Kitchen hot food around Gillett Square (Dalston) thursday, friday, saturday eves and St Paul's West Hackney (Stoken Newington Road) at 2pm on Sundays (by Akwaaba). Round Chapel, 2 Powerscroft Road, E5 0PU offers support and advice for the vulnerable, homeless people and families living in temporary housing. A new food project is also starting out of the [Castle Climbing Centre](#) on Green Lanes.

Ask the person if they have a place to stay. Local authorities are obliged to house all homeless folk during the pandemic lockdown, which is not to say that all do, or that their accommodation is adequate. Many shelters don't take pets, don't take users, feel unsafe for some people, etc. Also, people may be concerned that council support officers will share their data with the police and/or home office, which can put some people off the accommodation for obvious

reasons. If this is the case your best move is just to support people financially or with food, water, rain gear, and other practical items. Now that pubs and most public toilets are closed, and water fountains in parks have been turned off, if you could let someone use your bathroom that would be a great help. If people prefer to stay outside money helps, dog food, paracetamol, tampons, and always a friendly chat and an acknowledgment of their existence and fellow humanity!

If you are talking to someone and they do want to be accommodated by the council (while being aware of the potential risks) you can ask the person if they want you to link them up, for example via 'Street Link'. It's important to ask their consent because there can be many reasons why a person does not want their details shared. Some homeless organisations share information with the Home Office, who may want to deport someone, for example. If they're willing you can take their first name and phone number to follow up. You can do this for them (with their consent only!!) through [the StreetLink app](#), or through the website. Give your details as well as their contact number. In Hackney, you can let Streets Kitchen Outreach team know you have street linked so they can keep following up with Hackney Council.

Homeless Queers: [The Outside Project](#) and [Stonewall Housing](#)  
Homeless Queer refugees: [Micro Rainbow International](#) which seeks to provide safe housing

## Drugs

If you see someone you think may have overdosed on drugs, you should call an ambulance. Given that ambulances may be slow to arrive during the pandemic, you may consider administering naloxone (for opiate overdoses) (often known by its brand name Narcan).

Who has Narcan? The person may have been given naloxone by a drug and alcohol service, if they are responsive, ask if they have some on them and where they store it. If they have people around them, ask if they have [naloxone](#) on them. It is very straightforward to administer. It will work very quickly and the person may be

disoriented and may also deny that they were having an overdose. The effects of Naloxone are temporary and the person remains at risk of overdose without treatment by a paramedic, so encourage the person to wait for it and be treated.

**What are the typical symptoms of an overdose?** Head drooping, difficulty staying awake or keeping eyes open, slurred speech. may be non responsive, difficulty breathing, making 'snoring' sound (heroin). In case of suspected oral overdose and you have it to hand, administer activated charcoal – available from [Queercare web store](#), for £1 or free. If not, contact your local emergency medical services (**111** or **999**).

The lockdown has interrupted many regular drug supply lines, and as a result you may see more drug users in the streets, potentially strung out. [Talking drugs](#) offers harm reduction advice for drug users.

## Migrants with 'no recourse to public funds'

The high court recently found that applying a 'no recourse to public funds' condition to people with leave to remain in the UK is unlawful. We need to keep campaigning for all migrant people still locked out of the safety net, and in the meantime signpost migrant people refused access to public funds to the below organisations for help and advice.

[Hackney Migrant Centre](#)  
[Akwaaba](#)  
[Praxis](#) for Migrants and Refugees, E2  
[Project 17](#)  
[Factsheet on asylum support](#)  
Contact [Doctors of the World](#) if you are unable to, or don't feel safe to access the NHS  
Queer refugees: [Micro Rainbow International](#) which seeks to provide safe housing  
See also: [the Outside Project](#) for homeless Queers and [Stonewall Housing](#)

## Acute mental health distress

Ask open questions, summarise 'so what you're saying is...' and validate their response i.e 'that must be really terrifying', 'that sounds incredibly sad', 'I can hear you feel very hurt'.

Queercare have created a (draft) protocol on what to do when someone is in **acute mental health distress**.

You can also call **Samaritans/Nightline/LGBT Switchboard** for advice.

**Hearing voices resources**  
**Mind information support**  
**Mind helplines**

## When you see someone violating the Covid-19 social distancing guidelines

If your neighbour is having a party and the noise is bothering you, go over and talk to them. Getting to know your neighbours with community events like neighbourhood assemblies and socials (outside of lockdown) is a good way to make asking them to quiet down a little less uncomfortable, or to find another neighbour who is willing to do so.

## When you see a 'crime' being committed

Don't feel obligated to defend property—especially corporate "private" property. Before confronting someone or contacting the police, ask yourself if anyone is being hurt or endangered by property "theft" or damage. If the answer is "no," then let it be.

## When you see police harassing someone

When you see someone being harassed by the police, you can ask them if they are ok and need any help. You can also ask, do you mind if I film what's happening. If the cop tells you you can't film him, tell him that you know the law, and know that you are allowed to film the police. Before you get your phone out, it's a good idea to say, I am going to reach into my pocket now to get out my phone - so the cop doesn't think you're reaching for a weapon. Stay at some distance from the police while you film them. Your intervention alone may cause the police to stop harassing the person. If not, you will likely have captured some evidence.

The Y-Stop project have produced an app allowing you to record police violence and harassment and get advice, and possibly help with a complaint. Why not download the app now.

In a worst case scenario, the cops will harass you next. In that case, **Y-Stop's** advice is to stay calm, stay confident, maintain eye contact, ask questions that show you know the law, ask for a receipt, record your version of what happened, and hold the police to account.

If you are concerned about police behaviour you have seen, contact:

**Netpol** a network of activists, campaigners, lawyers which monitors and challenges public order, protest and street policing  
**LCAPSV**, a group of voluntary campaigners working to make the Metropolitan Police accountable to local communities  
**The Monitoring Group** the leading anti-racist charity that promotes civil rights, originally started in Southall.  
**Stopwatch**: Check out the booklet 'COVID-19 and the police - What you need to know' and contact Team StopWatch - [info@stop-watch.org](mailto:info@stop-watch.org) or call **07399 816 921** for support and advice on challenging the police.

### 'There was a man with a sword behaving oddly down by the compost area'

He was probably just practising martial arts! we do a lot of things outside these days that normally only happen indoors, especially exercise, making music, and martial arts!

### 'I got flashed on my run this morning'

Well that is certainly gross, annoying, and probably scary. If you call the cops though, they probably won't give a damn. Remember, they are not here to protect us; the police are not designed to provide the kind of care communities and individuals need. Next time you see a flasher, and especially if it's daytime situation and there are other people around, and you feel safe enough, you can shout, take their picture, or even just plain ignore them. They probably get off on the attention so one option is not to give them any.

### After a confrontation...

Looking after others... housing? mental health support? debrief chat and a cuppa? [for more serious issues, obviously call and ambulance, seek legal support, etc.]

Looking after yourself – do whatever normally works for you after experiencing a stressful situation: talk to a friend, do breathing exercises, write down what happened, spend time doing something completely different like cooking, cleaning, watering the plants, hang out with your pet, look at cat or dog videos online, dance it out.

If you have any comments or suggestions feel free to get in touch at [filthbusters@protonmail.com](mailto:filthbusters@protonmail.com)

### Really helpful and similar guides to this:

**Sisters uncut: Caring for each other during Covid**

**Transforming Society:** Lessons from covid-19: How transformative justice and mutual aid can help address harm in communities

**Massive list of resources,** services and organisations to refer to (London)

**Concrete Examples of Alternatives to Police (Turtle Island)**

**Aaron X Rose:** Alternatives to police

### Police Abolition

**Abolitionist Futures:** Articles on UK perspectives on police abolition

Gay Shame: **Abolition is the Floor, not the Ceiling**

**Sunday School video on police abolition** with Angela Davis, Dream Defenders and more

### Transformative Justice

**Beyond Survival:** Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement

Ejeris Dixon (Editor); Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (Editor) AK Press, 2020

### **Credits:**

Some words copied from:  
**MAY DAY COLLECTIVE** and  
**WASHTENAW SOLIDARITY  
& DEFENSE**

***Solidarity 123!***

