

MINUTES

Stop and Search Reference Group Meeting Minutes

Date | time 10/28/2019 4:00 PM | *Meeting called by* SSRG | *Venue:* Online (Microsoft Teams Meeting)

In Attendance

Apologies

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| <p>Franstine Jones – Chair Phanuel Mutumburi Georgia-Mae Chung Roger Salmon Jan Parry Sonia Plume Michelle Plume Tim Passmore Luke Hall Charlie Hall Audrey Ludwig Richard Bemment Robert Meen Colin Kreidewolf Philip Welham David Hammatt Aaron Fricker Tom Potter Sophie Hawkins Oliver Edwards Sharon O'Donell Ruby Peacock Robert Jones Sue Wardell Vivian David Brown Liz Harlaar</p> | |
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Welcome and Apologies

Chair welcomed all and introductions were had. Some frontline officers joined today to observe and listen for community members.

Dip sampling

AL explained that as part of the dip-sampling method used to select forms, she randomly picks

- 33% of BAME forms
- 10% of W1 forms
- 33% of any other forms

We selected:

- BAME: 29 from 87
- White British: 44 from 435
- White Other: 22 from 67

- Not Stated – 36 from 109

From these, she sends queries to Suffolk Police for comments

Based on the responses from the police she brings between 5 and 8 good/bad forms back to the meeting. We probably would not bring more than one related to the same type of issue or where there have been multiple people stopped and searched in the same incident.

Purpose of the discussion is to provide a community perspective to the Stop and Search process and inform good practice for the future, ultimately leading to reduction in the disproportionate use of the tool.

Review of Forms

Form 255675 – Concerns from the meeting that while the background and operation was explained, it was unclear whether there was any current intelligence.

Police response: Specific intelligence could have been elaborated on better here but there was an active briefing for someone in that party and the intel related to the particular individual believed to earn £300 a day from drug dealing. It is about combined behaviour: The group were sighted walking past police station, were engaged with and allowed on their way. They then headed towards the area where the drug dealing takes place. They were looking over their shoulders. This was sufficient.

A concern was raised about if people enjoying themselves on a night out and punching the air when they walk down the street may become a ground for stop and search.

Police response stressed that this is just part of a combined picture and not proof of anything in itself.

Form – 256007 – This concerned a male driver who was stopped for suspected driving offences. However, it was another male in the vehicle who was searched, along with the vehicle. Some evidence of drugs use was found within their bag. Occupants had time to conceal items and the driver admitted to being a cannabis user. Concerns were raised about struggling to understand how this progressed from a suspected driving offence to the passenger coming to be searched.

Police response: people in the vehicle were then detained for searches - the rationale being that they had time to conceal items. The rationale for stopping vehicle seems legitimate. However, the chronology of how they searched each individual cannot be clarified, even though the officer has been articulate in saying how they have progressed from one to the next.

Meeting agreed that the chronology could have been improved upon to show the rationale e.g. driving offences to drugs intel to concealed item to searching this person.

Form 255770 – Concerns were raised over these grounds consisting of a BAME person running from the police and the smell of cannabis.

Police response: Clarified that you cannot search someone based on the smell of cannabis alone. States that the officer involved also got an admission that the person searched was using cannabis.

There was concern over how this was not mentioned on the form and also that the subject of the search had not signed the form. **Action: The police will bring the omission of not signing the form back to the supervisor.**

It was questioned as to whether it is a good use of police resources to pursue young people every time they run from the police/are perceived as smelling of cannabis, given the common fear that young black men have of the police using force on them. We want to reduce the disproportionate use of stop and search against BAME people. It was suggested that more questions should be asked first about the circumstances and how a group has come together before taking further action.

Concern was raised that there needs to be more of a distinction between supply and possession for the justification of searches because of the criminality of gangs to make sense. Also that the smell of

cannabis is being used as a post hoc justification since we are seeing a lot of cannabis only stop and searches where the police do not find anything. Stop and searches need to be more intelligence-led and less opportunistic to get results, such as Class A drugs/money.

Police Response: Points out that they have a 25% finding rate, which is one of the highest in UK policing. Research shows that young people are supportive of stop and search as a deterrent for carrying drugs or weapons, so the test of efficiency is not just whether you find drugs. Although they recognize that the smell of cannabis is strong and sometimes the drugs will not be found when it is used as one of the grounds, that does not mean that the grounds are wrong as a whole.

The meeting was still concerned that people were not happy with stop and search being used in this way.

Form 254209 – There were no grounds for this search on the form.

Police response: Notes that the paper form is being phased out and they suspect that what has happened is that it has been submitted to admin support without pushing back to the officer submitting it. This is therefore an anomaly caused by the move to a digital-based submission process. They have contacted the subject.

Action: Police were asked to report back if the subject of the search gets back in contact with them.

Form 255771 – Concerned a vehicle driving at excess speed and the vehicle was searched to look for a weapon that the subject had been seen producing within a month of this stop. There was a conflict with others at the location and this was also used as a ground.

Meeting agreed that the form is confusing. There was debate and a lack of agreement between the police and others at the meeting over whether someone carrying a knife a month ago should be used as a ground to stop someone because police suspect that they might be holding a knife.

Information Provision

PM - The current information is that we need to help communities to understand what is happening with stop and search. There are some issues with the term BAME when considering disproportionality, since BAME can cover a lot of different people. Not sure that it is specific enough.

Recognizes that there are counterarguments to this around some of our areas where they have small populations. He asks that, if there are people who feel strongly about this either way, then they please get in touch with us so that we can work with the police to help with this.

Youth Engagement

PM – Acknowledged that he invited youth groups to the meeting, but they have not managed to attend. Some youth leaders feel that there is the need for education for young people on their rights and what they can and cannot do. We want to give them the information so that they can then go away and provide it. We can look further into how this can be achieved.

Community and Police Updates

The meeting was concerned about the lack of consistency in the way that statistics are reported on the constabulary website. The purpose of the public information is to ensure that members of the public can monitor performance trends.

Any other Business

LH – States that she sits independently on the coercive powers monitoring group and raises concern that there is disproportionality in use of force and coercive powers. She agreed that ISCRE would be approached to join scrutiny group.

*** The group discussed youth engagement:**

PM – ISCRE have been in contact with the local MP on several occasions and there has been no engagement. They have spoken with the Youth Council comprehensively about stop and search. They are also trying to use social media platforms to reach out to young people. COVID-19 has not helped because it prevents physical meetings with young people. We do welcome any ideas in terms of young people who are congregating that weekend.

FJ – Mentions that she will be delivering a workshop in December on stop and search with young people.

RS – Asked if we can record this so that he can share it with student officers as they arrive.

PW – Suggests that it would be good to have a debrief about these meetings in places with a less strong police presence, particularly since some of the things that we have discussed go outside the scope of the stop and search meetings.

LH – is more than happy to go outside the discussions of this main format.