



Update from the Stop Search Operational Group

April 2018

Update from Chief Inspector Gary Ashton

This month's meeting considered several subjects and how we might best approach them.

Disproportionality

Our data still points to disproportionality (a greater proportion of black and minority ethnic people being searched than white). We understand we're disproportionate, but we don't understand why.

This is not unique to Northamptonshire Police. Indeed, inspectors in HMICFRS have raised a national cause for concern around this question, recommending that forces put suitable arrangements in place by July to understand and begin to address disproportionality.

Theories include that we are searching in certain areas, targeting known suspects etc, but our theories remain untested. Because we don't adequately understand the disproportionality issues, we can't work to address them.

The group raised this matter with Chief Officers the next working day and secured senior officer support to undertake some specific work in this area, at the same time improving our community engagement on stop search, in line with feedback received from the public.

A small working group will now meet to quickly progress this work. Northamptonshire Police is very well placed to understand this given our work with the London School of Economics and our internationally recognised Reasonable Grounds Panel process.

Electronic recording and officer training

The group was also updated about a new stop search electronic recording approach that comes in later this year, making our data more accurate and timely and therefore helping us to make better informed decisions about how our officers use stop search powers and what additional training and support we need to provide.

Following the push on stop search training, there are now only 64 response officers who haven't completed the training (a third of these are still undergoing their initial training.) A new approach to training special constables has also been introduced to improve uptake.

Published data

Feedback from the community is that our quarterly published infographic needs more context to help people understand it. Our data expert will now work to address this.

Internal communications

We continue to promote messages internally about fairness and accuracy, including messages to advise officers about correctly coding their searches so the object searched for is accurately reflected on our systems, which ensures that if a vehicle is present, we record whether the person we are searching is the driver or passenger. We also promote messages about what 'good grounds' look like and the importance of acting only on recent intelligence when undertaking searches.

If you have any feedback on the police use of stop and search, please email us at SSWG@northants.pnn.police.uk.