



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
POLICE
Fighting Crime. Protecting People.

USE OF POWERS SCRUTINY PANEL

Summary of On-line Discussion: 14 December 2023

Chief Inspector Pete Basham welcomed a small but dedicated number of participants to the on-line discussion. As always, he was expecting an interesting range of opinions on the Use of Force video clips shown at the last meeting.

FEEDBACK FROM 9 NOVEMBER 2023

Stop & Search

CASE 1: The male detained at the side of a busy road following a report that he had approached a member of the public saying "I have a knife on me" - Scored at **86%** - no action required.

There were some negative comments about conducting the search so close to other members of the public; CI Basham commented that this was a matter of judgement for an individual officer who had to balance privacy for the subject with the possibility of antagonizing by-standers.

CASE 2: A young male was searched on suspicion of possessing drugs - Scored at **88%** - no action required.

The Panel felt that the initial approach to the young male was somewhat aggressive, but otherwise the comments were positive; the Panel was particularly impressed that the officer had telephoned the subject's parents to inform them of the incident.

CASE 3: Female searched in a crowded room on suspicion of possessing drugs - Scored at **83%** - no action required.

The Panel was generally satisfied with the way in which the search had been conducted, but again queried whether it would have been better if conducted in a quieter place, with fewer people around.

Use of Force

CASE 4: A firearms deployment, following a report that hotel staff had been threatened by a male with a handgun. The suspects' vehicle was brought to a stop and driver and passenger were negotiated out by two officers with drawn weapons - Scored at **54%** - remedial feedback required.

CI Basham noted that there had been several occasions when the Panel had been divided on its response to firearms incidents, so he had approached the Firearms Training inspector for specialized feedback on this case:

This is actually a very well managed armed stop by the two Officers. Considering they are on their own they remain calm, conduct a controlled call out of subjects in the vehicle with almost no physical force (as in hands on) used on either subject. At no point are the comms aggressive or overbearing and in my opinion the instructions given are clear and concise.

I do agree with the final panel point about the view from the camera. We are in the final stages of securing new cameras that will be available to be worn on bespoke caps allowing the cameras to stay free from obstruction from the weapons Officers are carrying.

APPENDIX A shows some examples of the difference these cameras will make. For reference, the blocked footage from the incident is an Officer carrying a carbine.

Further, CI Basham had received a pledge that a Firearms trainer would attend a future “in person” meeting to provide some information on the Force’s expectations on how incidents should be managed, the risk assessments that Firearms officers had to make, and to answer the Panel’s questions.

The Panel members present were largely supportive of the way in the which the incident had been handled, expressing some surprise that the score had been so low; this was probably due to members not feeling equipped to answer all of the questions, which skewed the results. The obstructed view of the suspects recorded by the chest-worn camera was highlighted, with the Panel commenting that had the officer discharged his carbine, he would have had little evidence with which to defend his action. On the issue of communication style, the Panel felt it reasonable for officers to “come in hard and clear” with their instructions.

OUTCOME: Replica gun found in glove box. Driver charged with possession of an offensive weapon with intent to cause fear of violence, criminal damage (at the custody suite) and failing to supply a specimen; driving whilst unfit through drink or drugs was NFA’d. He is remanded in custody (risk of flight) awaiting trial in the Crown Court. Passenger was not charged with any offences.

CASE 5: Suspected young female shoplifter resists detention for Stop & Search so the officer uses unarmed tactics to gain control - Scored at **63%** - remedial feedback required.

CI Basham commented that the officer had appeared quite rough; the Panel’s feedback concurred, noting he should not have grabbed the suspect by the neck, and should have taken more care to explain why she was being detained. CI Basham reminded the Panel that they had encountered this officer before, and praised him for his communication with the vulnerable young female suspect he had arrested. Nevertheless, he had personally provided the officer with remedial feedback because his failure to place the female in handcuffs had allowed her to run off. Therefore, he had asked the officer’s supervisor to conduct this reflective session:

I have debriefed this with [the officer] today, fully discussed with BWV played back as part of discussion, a couple of learning points taken away. The mechanism of grabbing was identified by [the officer] before I mentioned it (on reviewing BWV), so all sorted and awareness increased.

The Panel was satisfied with the supervisor's report; CI Basham commented that reflective sessions were designed to mitigate the risk of poor decision-making recurring.

OUTCOME: As the goods had been recovered, the store was content to leave things at that.

CASE 6: A drunken verbally abusive male was manoeuvred from his hospital bed to the police van by means of a MegaMover - Scored at **88%** - no action required.

There were some comments from the Panel about the apparent lack of engagement with the suspect. CI Basham noted that the video clip had shown a short extract from a very long incident, and it was possible that the officers had previously tried to build a rapport but had simply given up in the face of the tirade of drunken abuse.

On the subject of the MegaMover, CI Basham explained that this was a relatively new piece of equipment, introduced to the Force within the last couple of years. He confirmed that it was made of a breathable material, so the suspect's breathing would not have been impaired. The Panel would have the opportunity to examine a MegaMover during January's meeting, and maybe even try it for themselves, a volunteer having come forward!

In response to a question from the Panel, CI Basham advised that the issue of the county's hospitals providing a discrete area in which officers and the people they had arrested could wait for transport to custody had been taken forward by the High Sheriff. He would ask Mr Shah for an update when next he spoke to him.

OUTCOME: Suspect arrested on suspicion of assault, criminal damage and public order offences. Not charged with assault, but because he admitted the other offences when interviewed under police caution, he was given a Community Resolution Disposal for the public order offence, and a Conditional Caution – to pay for the damage to hospital equipment – for the criminal damage.

MEMBERSHIP

CI Basham remarked that he was going to look at the issue of recruitment at the beginning of the New Year; whilst he felt that this year's success story had been the involvement of young people, he was still keen to expand the Panel's membership. New people would bring new opinions and new ideas, and he was especially keen to attract members of the community with relevant lived experience of interacting with the police. One member remarked that she continued to attend meetings because it was clear to her that the Force valued and used the Panel's feedback, and she was able to see how its deliberations were influencing officer training.

FEEDBACK FROM HM INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY & FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES

CI Basham noted that the report was expected in February 2024; he undertook to share any feedback provided as a result of the Inspectors attending a couple of the Panel's meetings.

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

CI Basham announced that he had arranged for Daventry & South Northants (the policing area for which he had responsibility) IAG to trial the scrutiny of local Stop & Search incidents. He felt it would be beneficial for IAGs to understand what was occurring in their local areas, whilst the Panel retained the countywide remit for Use of Force scrutiny.

ACTION: CI Basham to provide feedback from the Daventry & South Northants IAG trial at February's discussion meeting.

A member of the Wellingborough IAG commented that he had previously asked for demographic data on Stop & Search in his area, but it had not been provided. CI Basham advised that the Stop & Search Working Group received demographic data, and it too was keen to see more localized data; he advised that this was currently "work in progress". He commented that it was pleasing to see the appetite for local groups to scrutinize what was going on in their own areas, leaving the Working Group to monitor overall themes and trends. By way of illustration, he referred to what seemed to be spike in Bangladeshi subjects being Stopped & Searched in Wellingborough some time since; by examining the data locally, the IAG could have been reassured that the activity was based on tested intelligence.

NB: Countywide Stop & Search data is published on the Force website at

<https://www.northants.police.uk/police-forces/northamptonshire-police/areas/northamptonshire-force-content/sd/stats-and-data/stop-and-search2/>

The Co-chair of Stop & Search Working Group sat on the Panel; he offered to arrange for the colleague who had expressed in interest in Wellingborough data to become a member, but not until the Group's current reorganization was complete.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

In response to a question about other forces' community scrutiny activities, CI Basham advised that he had been invited to observe the arrangements put in place by the Police & Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire. He commented that he had gained some useful insight.

The Panel also wondered whether there had been any changes to the volume of complaints made about the Force's Stop & Search activities or Use of Force since it had first convened. CI Basham did not have accurate data to hand, but advised that the overall volume of complaints had risen. Whilst this was, in part, due to the Force's focus on making it easier to lodge complaints, he also regarded it as a positive sign that communities were confidence that the police would respond honestly to criticism.

The Community Co-chaired thanked members for attending, and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

(a)



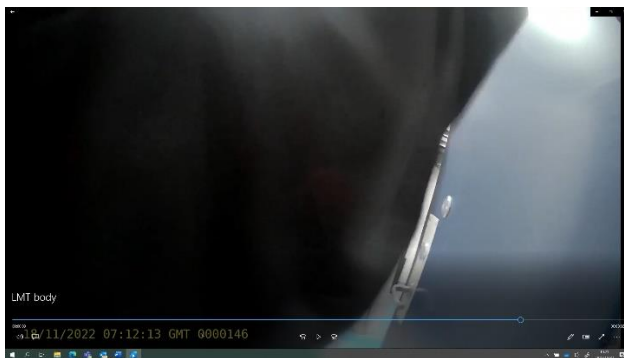
Chest mounted camera with sidearm drawn

(b)



Head mounted camera with sidearm drawn

(c)



Chest mounted camera with carbine drawn

(d)



Head mounted camera with carbine drawn