

Northamptonshire Police
USE OF POWERS SCRUTINY PANEL
11-01-2024

Pete Basham and Titus Ajayi (Co-chairs) welcomed everyone to the meeting. CI Basham reiterated the importance of community perceptions in driving up standards in officer training, and in improving the performance of individual officers through feedback on the cases scrutinized by the Panel. He was really keen to grow the Panel's membership to achieve an even great mix of people and ideas. To that end, he was planning a vlog to encourage potential recruits to come forward, and challenged the Community Co-chair to appear in front of the camera alongside him.

The Panel watched video clips of six incidents recorded by officers using their body-worn video cameras, three Stop & Search interactions, and three examples of Use of Force. The video clips were randomly selected from incidents occurring in November 2023 by the Community Co-chair.

Stop & Search

CASE 1: The passenger in a vehicle whose driver made off following a drug wipe test was found to smell strongly of cannabis. She was searched on suspicion that she was in possession of drugs. The Panel scored the officer at **90%**.

- *Good use of gloves*
- *Appeared to be a routine Stop and Search – no concerns*
- *The officer explained the procedure as [she was] conducting the search*
- *I think the interaction was clear and positive and the officer spoke through each step*
- *Good, especially around the more personal searches*

CASE 2: A male wearing a ski mask obscuring his face was searched at the roadside on suspicion of possessing drugs. He was located in an area where intelligence indicated a large amount of drug dealing was carried out, and was spotted heading towards a group of known drug users. When stopped, the male appeared nervous; he had an eye injury and provided false details to the officers. The Panel scored the officer at **76%**.

- *Provide more grounds for the search; the officer did not go through the preliminary grounds with the gentleman*
- *The use of cuffs could have been avoided as the guy was calm and co-operative*
- *Good use of questioning techniques but the intro was poor*
- *Too familiar – Why were the officers swearing when the male didn't?*
- *Officer stated "We cuff everyone we search" – he should have just said he was a risk*
- *Officers did not listen to the person's concerns regarding eye injury – Person appeared anxious and had visible injury; was stopped in a public place with large presence of people. Police car may have given reassurance for further discussion.*
- *Highlighted injured eye but could have offered medical attention/first aid during search*

- *Explained legislation but didn't say what they were looking for*
- *Good amount of explanation, especially as I think the subject may have had some complexities – should have searched him away from the main road, adapted speech for his needs and checked his understanding, and should have answered his questions around feeling targeted because of his race*

CASE 3: Care home staff contacted the police stating that one of their service users had walked out of the house carrying two knives. They were with him, but could not persuade him to hand over the weapons. The Panel scored the officer at **91%**.

- *The officers were very patient with the young man which is good to note*
- *The officers could have asked to see where the subject cut himself as he claimed. Its important for the officers to be satisfied that the subject hadn't hurt anyone*
- *Calm when speaking with the young person*
- *Voice of the Child: It may have been asked but the video clip didn't show whether the officers asked the boy why he had a knife*
- *Officer was calm, clear and appropriately explained what was happening. Checked the young person understood his rights*
- *Officer explained steps/actions as he was conducting the search*
- *Established a minor injury but no medical attention offered. Communication could have been consistent during the search*
- *Knew about injury but no medical treatment given*
- *Positive: Subject was asked if weapon was to harm himself as it could be related to mental health*

Use of Force

There was a pause in the proceedings whilst the Panel members examined a MegaMover and – thanks to the public spiritedness of one of their number! – were able to use it for themselves under the watchful direction of PCSO Barber. Our selfless volunteer was able to answer the question which had arisen at the last meeting, and confirmed to the Panel that the MegaMover was made of breathable fabric.

CASE 4: This incident involved a high-risk missing person, a young female who was located and arrested for assaulting her carers. It took place at the side of a busy road and the young female was clearly very distressed; she had threatened to take her life by running into the traffic. She was restrained with handcuffs, fast straps and a spit hood; the video clip showed her being moved to safety in a MegaMover. The Panel scored the officers at **78%**.

- *The officers listened to the cry of pain and they checked the handcuff and gave appropriate instructions to the lady – this is commendable*
- *A difficult situation handled well*
- *One of the officers did not have glove*
- *Maybe a mental health practitioner could have helped the subject – however, officers were patient and professional*

- *The team worked well together. Mindful of her breathing, safety of cuffs, demonstrated compassion. Good teamwork*
- *Officer training the team? Did very well*
- *Very good work from officer; good communications, very good teamwork, very professional*
- *Without knowing the whole issue its hard to comment; however, throughout officers were patient and polite and one officer took role of offering reassurance to the young person*
- *Young person became calmer during stages and was verbally and physically expressing pain; she was not communicated with clearly regarding next steps, nor given the opportunity to calmly move. As a vulnerable young person communication was not clear*
- *Officers worked calmly and one was clear when directing, however explanation to the young person could have eased the on-going tension and avoided the need for the MegaMover*
- *As she was distressed it wasn't clear if she understood even though officers explained as they moved forward*
- *Injured party was clearly distressed throughout and was offered very little reassurance throughout. Use of force through x2 handcuffs, spit hood and MegaMover was not proportionate as there did not appear to be active resistance. More communication with the young person could have resolved things quicker*
- *Don't feel all methods were needed for the subject; kept her near the main road for too long. Do feel there were points where subject was calmer which weren't utilized as she was on the floor. Female officer in particular was patient and reassuring to the subject, which was positive*

CASE 5: The suspect was a male who had taken drugs and alcohol and had reportedly assaulted his parents in their home; in the course of his arrest, he also assaulted a police officer. He was verbally abusive, threatening to assault the officers, and was actively resisting their attempts to control him. The Panel was most concerned that members of the suspect's family were allowed to remain in the same room as he was being PAVA'd and brought under control, and scored the officers at 74%.

- *Officers wore gloves!! The officers were also given a helping hand by the family members!*
- *Family members should have been removed from the situation. Subject was under the influence of alcohol/drugs, therefore could not have comprehended the instructions anyway. The unnecessary "support" from others further aggravated the situation. It was absolutely unnecessary to have more than one family member – right from the moment the officers were at the entrance of the house*
- *A very difficult situation; officers managed it well, dealing with a challenging situation. They still remembered to use gloves under the circumstances*
- *I think officers should have acted faster from the beginning and moved the parent/brother away; they did well to gain control*
- *I wouldn't want to have been those officers. Officers did well to gain control quickly to reduce further harm. Very patient officer*

- *Members of the household who were aggravating the situation were continually overspeaking officers; house members should have been instructed to leave so instructions to person were clear and the additional aggravating factors eliminated*
- *Concerned about his eyes after being sprayed – how long before his eyes were looked at?*
- *Officer with the Taser could have approached the situation calmly initially; officers could have controlled environment by requesting family members to leave the room and not get involved; PAVA'd whilst handcuffed; MegaMover done quickly considering cramped conditions*
- *The Taser came out far too quickly; shouting at subject further escalated situation; didn't seem conscious of obstructions when handling subject; subject choking from PAVA and still on his back; joking and jovial when subject in distress - I hope the subject got the help and support needed and not just prosecution*

CASE 6: Officers found the male suspected of aggravated burglary (threatening the householders with knives and hammers) in his car, parked outside his house. The suspect reacting aggressively, tackling the arresting officer to the ground and biting his leg. Unarmed kills, Taser, and PAVA spray were used to bring the suspect under control. Whilst some Panel members were not convinced the degree of force used was essential, the overall score awarded to the officers was **72%**.

- *I am surprized that Taser was not deployed at the subject! The attack on the officer was unnecessary and unexpected. I commend the officer for the level of restraint in not applying more force than necessary*
- *As officers, they could have been better prepared for the attack by the subject as they were aware he had weapons – he was not approached with enough caution*
- *The officers were faced with unique situation. The biting and officers' response is debatable but appears reasonable. However, other officers were present – should have intervened to protect/prevent office to use force*
- *Perhaps Taser should have been deployed sooner*
- *Officers were faced with a human animal – one officer was being attacked and it was clear from his face he was in pain. The officer who was attacked in my opinion acted in self-defence to protect himself and gain control*
- *Officers gained control quickly. Excessive use of PAVA spray at close proximity to eyes; Officer being injured appeared to use excessive force once person was PAVA'd by putting his arm around neck*
- *It was a difficult situation for the officers as the person attacked the officer from outset – just wondered about the thin line on acceptable force*
- *PAVA used had an impact and began to gain control of situation; however the choke hold was not necessary*
- *No consideration for mental health or substance vulnerabilities when signs were present. Extra use of PAVA when first subdued subject; tackled officer hit subject directly in his face*

The Co-chairs thanked everyone for their participation, expressing their appreciation of the Panel members' commitment to this initiative.

KB

12-01-2024