

Highlight report and Minutes- External Scrutiny Panel for Use of Force and Stop/Search 21/12/23



1. Introduction

The external scrutiny panel was held in the Redcar Area. 9 members of the public attended in order to give independent feedback on a selection of BWV footage. The session was chaired by Chief Inspector, Peter Littlewood with Sergeant, Liam Crowe.

2. Content

10 videos were prepared for this session. It was anticipated that the session would be able to get through 5 Stop Searches and 5 incidents where force was used by police. The panel asked a lot of questions and created some fantastic dialogue. Police had hoped to review more footage but the panel were satisfied with the content. We gave the panel the option to skip a video when we were satisfied that no more relevant BWV content was in that content. The learning input was again effective and led to good conversation and gave the panel minimum knowledge regarding expectations for standards.

Early discussions with the panel before the meeting commenced revealed that some members had various levels of experience with Cleveland Police whilst others had no experience or contact previously.

The feedback for each piece of footage as decided by the panel will be outlined below.

Stop Search:

1. SE23232859

After reviewing the footage, the panel immediately commented on the officer's calm and friendly demeanour, particularly when explaining the grounds of the search to the subject as GOWISELY felt natural and none robotic.

It was highlighted that the officer's BWV was deactivated prior to the encounter ending which was not procedure and the chair confirmed that the video should not be interrupted until the encounter has ended.

Overall the panel considered the stop/search to be proportionate and necessary given the circumstances.

2. SE23241625

The panel felt that the officers tone from the beginning of the encounter was abrupt and slightly aggressive towards the young male which didn't help the situation.

It was mentioned by one panel members who works with vulnerable children that the officers should have been able to identify the young males vulnerabilities from the outset as he displayed signs of ADHD and managed him in a more appropriate manner. Although it was accepted by the panel that the young male was aggressive and making threats which cannot be accepted.

It was therefore considered appropriate when officers used a degree of force to facilitate the search.

The chair explained that despite the original object of the search not being found, instead a small amount of cannabis, the search was still lawful and it was correct to arrest the male upon its discovery.

Overall it was thought that the search was lawful with GOWISELY being followed but it was thought that the officer's attitude contributed to the situation escalating due to his initial demeanour.

3. RM23080040

Following a review of the footage, a discussion took place questioning whether the officer had sufficient grounds for the search as it was based on recent intelligence; rather than the officer's observations.

The panel chair confirmed that intelligence could be used when justifying a search and it would be dependent on a numbers of factors with regards to its creditability. It should be used as the sole reason for a search but if the intelligence then linked in with a date, time and location for example then this would be sufficient.

Overall the feedback from the panel was positive and it was agreed that GOWISELY was followed with a good rapport built with the subject.

4. SE23190147

The panel immediately raised comes concerns regarding the officer's legal grounds of this particular search as it appeared that he was searching the male on the basis he had been found in possession of drugs which alone did not justify a power of search.

The Chair shared this view and agreed that the officer didn't have the sufficient just using his previous knowledge alone, and that he could have spoken with the male initially in more depth, thus strengthening his grounds.

It was highlighted that the officer searched a second male who appeared on scene sometime after the initial encounter and he was searched with no real reasonable explanation, without GOWISELY being followed.

Overall it was concluded that the search did not meet the required standard and feedback would be provided to the officer concerned.

5. SE23240576

This footage was not reviewed due to time constraints.

Use of Force:

1. SE23223980

The chair discussed the use of PAVA spray; with some of the advantages and disadvantages highlighted and the aftercare officers are expected to provide when the substance is deployed.

After reviewing the footage, the panel praised the officer's actions, stating that the male was clearly intent on escape and given the severity of the alleged offences committed, it was vital that the officers acted promptly to detain the subject, thus preventing further harm to the victim.

Overall the panel believed officer's action was PLANE compliant (Proportionate, Legal, Adequate, Necessary, Ethical).

2. SE23212217

The panel agreed that the level of force used by officers was proportionate in the circumstances as the male was immediately verbally aggressively and behaviour escalated overtime. However a number of panel members believed one of the officers arriving initially could have handled the situation in a more diplomatic manner and he aggravated situation by mirroring the male behaviour raising his voice on multiple occasions.

One panel member highlighted that it was clear from the outset that the male showed indicators that he would be violent upon arrest and questioned why the officers didn't formulate a plan prior to attempting to make the arrest as it may have prevented the use of PAVA.

The chair then discussed the use of PAVA spray; with some of the advantages and disadvantages highlighted.

Overall it was believed that the officer deploying PAVA acted appropriately in the eyes of the panel and the subject was provided with aftercare post incident.

3. SE23239059

The chair discussed the use of Police dogs in day to day operations and how useful this asset can be to officers on the ground when trying to locate and detain offenders.

After reviewing the footage, officers highlighted that the dog had travelled some considerable distance, while being out of sight of the handler and on a residential street. T/SGT 2231 then highlighted some of the information and intelligence available to the dog handler at the time of deploying the dog and the panel discussed whether it was PLANE compliant (Proportionate, Legal, Adequate, Necessary, and Ethical).

Given the circumstances the panel indicated that it was proportionate and praised the officer removing the dog promptly before providing immediate medical attention to the subject.

4. SE23210560

The panel chair discussed the purpose of the forces pro-active team and searches powers which can be used by officers to locate and arrest outstanding offenders.

After reviewing the footage the panel commented on the arresting officer's demeanour throughout as it was felt that he was firm but fair when explaining his actions and despite using force against the subject he remained professional throughout, offering the appropriate aftercare.

This particular incident involved an arrested male who attempted to consume drugs when being detained which resulted in the officer using force.

The chair discussed the consequences of such actions and highlighted the power used by Police to use force in these circumstances.

5. SE23239059

This footage was not reviewed due to time constraints.

5. Feedback from participants

The following feedback was gathered from a MS forms questionnaire.

6. Learning Points

The above feedback and learning opportunities will be taken into the delivery group meeting, chaired by Superintendent Anderson (stop search) or Superintendent Stockdale (use of force) .

Sgt Crowe will provide an update on external scrutiny, and will provide feedback to the officers involved in these incidents as directed by the panel and can be escalated if deemed necessary.

The panel will continue to operate as it did in this session as there was no improvements suggested.