



Scrutiny Theme	External Scrutiny for Stop and Search/Use of Force
Commissioned by	Superintendent Anderson (Stop and Search Lead) Superintendent Richardson (Use of Force Lead)
Report completed by	Oliver Deluce Iain Bentley
Participants	Superintendent Anderson (Co-Chair) Superintendent Richardson (Co-Chair) Oliver Deluce (Deputy Chair) Chief Inspector Tom Legg (Observing) Iain Bentley (Minutes) PC John Skerritt (Uniformed Representative) Independent Panel Members
Date started	26/3/26

Introduction

The session 26/3/26 was the first following a “refresh” of the external scrutiny panels. Internally, the Stop and Search/Use of Force reviews have been renamed to “Public Treatment”, this has not been extended to the external panel to ensure that the purpose of the panel is clear.

For transparency, two incidents that were randomly selected to be included in the Use of Force review were excluded and replacements were randomly selected. These incidents were rejected due to a conflict of interest with one of the officers involved in the use of force and one of Cleveland Police’s facilitators, and the other was rejected as it contained unnecessary nudity. The subject in question was attempting to escape from their handcuffs in the cage whilst being transported to Custody. Whilst doing this, the subject’s clothes became tangled and ultimately exposed intimate parts of the subject. To prevent undue embarrassment to that subject, the footage was rejected.

Participants

Twenty invitations were sent out to members of the public and community stakeholders. Of these, 15 attended with all external stakeholders being present. The panel was made up of professionals from a variety of fields including adolescent safeguarding, SEMH schools, Social Work, Further Education provision for Uniformed Services, the Open-Door charity and special representation from our Black communities, which was achieved through the Black Excellence event hosted earlier in the year by Cleveland Police.

Stop and Search

Video 1 – P2840RM26019823

- The group agreed that the grounds for stop search were reasonable.
- One panel member suggested that more detail could have been provided by the officer on specifically why the subject matched the description provided.
- The group concurred that GOWISELY was followed in the correct manner.
- The subject was asked by the officer to move to the side of a busy public street – this was viewed as a positive action by the group.



- Officer asked the subject their ethnicity by framing the question as “I identify as White British – what would you say you were?” This was also viewed as a positive action by the group.
- General demeanour/attitude displayed by the officer towards the subject was seen as being very good by the panel.
- One panel member asserted that a presumption had been made by the officer that prescription drugs should be carried/managed in a certain way, rather than on the person.
- Subject was searched under PACE Section 1 which resulted in a positive outcome. The group expected this to be the case.
- Whilst clear that the subject was intoxicated, one panel member reflected on how well the subject understood what was happening and the purpose by which the stop search was being carried out. Supt Marc Anderson explained all reasonably practicable steps should be taken to ensure that the subject is fully understanding and co-operative with the stop search. The group confirmed they understood this.
- Oliver Deluce explained that the actions taken by officers in using handcuffs as a Use of Force was to both protect themselves and preserve the safety of the wider surrounding general public.
- One panel member asked if handcuffs were always used in stop search. Supt Paul Richardson explained that the use of this technique can vary depending on the circumstances of the stop search but the level of intoxication in the subject made this Use of Force wholly proportionate and justified.

Video 2 – P3353RM26019823

- All panel members acknowledged that the low quality of the audio in the video made it difficult to fully understand what the officer and subject were saying. Apologies were made by Supt Marc Anderson for this.
- The group agreed that the grounds on which stop search was conducted were reasonable, proportionate and necessary.
- All panel members acknowledged that the officer fully explained to the subject the grounds on which he was being stop searched – this was seen as a positive action by the panel.
- The ethnicity of the subject was recorded using the same technique as in Video 1 – the panel viewed this as a positive action by the officer.
- Officer had asked subject for name and address details – Supt Marc Anderson advised the panel that this information was not required to conduct Stop Searches. The panel unanimously agreed that obtaining these details took longer than it should have done.
- The panel felt that as the subject had provided false details to the officer on x3 occasions gave rise to the officer’s levels of suspicion and subsequent reasonable grounds to conduct the stop search.
- PC Skerritt highlighted to the panel that the officer’s ability to build a rapport with the subject was key throughout the stop search – taking the time to do this ensured the compliance of the subject. The panel agreed with these views.

Video 5 – P2610RM26019676

- Initial thoughts of the panel suggested that the response by the officer towards the subject appeared to be overly forceful.
- Supt Paul Richardson and Oliver Deluce provided context on the video that the subject had made off once sighted by police in a hot spot area for violent offences and



weapon crime. Recent intelligence received for subject carrying a firearm and showing it to members of the public.

- One panel member questioned if this was normal practice for an unarmed officer to attend an incident of this nature. Supt Marc Anderson explained that he would have expected attending officers to have received a STAYSAFE briefing from the Force Control Room prior to arrival on scene.
- Panel agreed unanimously that the grounds on which the stop search was conducted were reasonable, proportionate and necessary.
- The group was satisfied that all elements of GOWISELY were met by the officer in the video.
- Officer feedback: the grounds for detainment perhaps could have been explained to the subject earlier than they were in the video. The panel felt that this could have been done during the wait for supporting officers to attend the scene. For context, Oliver Deluce explained to the panel that the subject regularly has police contact and would likely have been fully aware why they were stopped in this case.
- Stop Search under Section 47 was explained to the subject by the officer, along with the intelligence received in relation to making off following sight of Police in the area.
- The panel were satisfied that the officer explained to the subject that a copy of the Stop Search (negative) could be sent to his mobile phone number – this was seen as a positive action by the panel.

Videos 3 and 4 were not reviewed due to time constraints.

Use of Force

Video 6 – PP3327SE26041174

- Video stopped once UoF complete.
- Initial thoughts of panel – the subject did not look like he would pose a threat, but all panel members agreed that they would trust the presence of the Police in this scenario.
- The decision taken by the officer to red dot the subject with a taser was fully informed and was the correct one taking into account the circumstances under which the call for service had been made. This context was provided to the panel by Oliver Deluce.
- Demeanour of officers – extremely aggressive but commensurate with situation. One panel member believed that the aggression shown by multiple officers may have been excessive as it appeared to confuse the subject as he emerged from the bushes. Oliver Deluce explained that the intent was to cause shock and impact in a critical situation.
- Supt Paul Richardson advised that the attending officer was STO trained so will have received additional training to strategically manage these incidents.
- Supt Paul Richardson highlighted to the panel that with the Taser Trained Officer controlling the situation, two supporting officers cuffing the subject from the rear whilst still being red dotted was viewed to be a minor criticism.
- Overall, the panel felt that officer actions were swift, effective and that the situation was dealt with exceptionally well by all officers involved.

Video 7 – P3461SE26045068

- Video stopped once UoF complete.
- Initial thoughts of the panel: Level of restraint and UoF being used by officers was fully proportionate.



- One panel member considered that one officer kneeling on the suspect was too aggressive. Other panel members disagreed with this and agreed with the proportional UoF given the subject continued to aggressively shout at officers.
- The panel thought that to other general members of the public, two male officers versus one female subject could be viewed as being a disproportionate UoF and potentially lead to poor public perception.
- One panel member asked if it would have been more beneficial to deploy a female officer in this situation – Oliver Deluce explained that 25% of Cleveland Police’s officers are female but work is continuing in this area to recruit more female frontline officers.
- Officer feedback: decision on whether to cuff the subject from the front or the rear took too long and did not help to de-escalate the situation.
- Panel thought the subject could have been moved somewhere else, away from the scene/outside the property to properly de-escalate the situation. All panel members agreed that good de-escalation skills could have made this incident much calmer from the outset.
- Officer demeanour: all panel members observed that the officer remained composed throughout and spoke to the subject calmly.

Video 8 – P3097SE26045529

- Video stopped once UoF complete.
- All panel members agreed that the UoF was fully proportionate, legal and necessary as the subject became combative once he had left the vehicle of his own accord.
- Officer demeanour: generally observed as being good by the panel. Patient approach shown in negotiating with the subject whilst they remained in the vehicle.
- Officer learning: subject had become irate as officers had stopped the vehicle without the use of emergency lights. The panel agreed that this was understandable and should be considered by the officers in the future.
- Officer feedback: Supt Paul Richardson highlighted to the panel that the other subjects in the rear of the vehicle were passive in response to the presence of Police. Had this not been the case the situation could have further escalated so back-up should have been requested at an earlier stage from the attending officers.

Video 9 – P3665SE26047949

- Initial thoughts from panel: the group observed a volatile situation shown in the video – initial instructions from attending officers focussed on what ‘not to do’ rather than the use of de-escalation tactics.
- Restraining the subject was considered by the group to be a struggle – not helped by multiple members of the public surrounding the subject. The panel agreed that they felt the presence of an audience encouraged the subject to continue to resist the restraint by officers.
- Underlying context of the incident was explained by Oliver Deluce and the panel fully agreed with the UoF.
- One panel member asked if it would have been more appropriate for officers to try and de-escalate away from the scene and the sight of the general public. Other panel members agreed.
- Use of Force: the panel concluded that although they agreed with the circumstances surrounding UoF, the subject should have been cuffed at the rear at a later stage, away from the scene rather than whilst still in the view of the general public.
- Overall, the panel concluded that attending officers did a really good job in what was an extremely difficult situation.

Video 10 – P3135SE26047751

- Video stopped once UoF complete.



- Initial thoughts: subject verbally resisted the officer but no physical attempt made – questioned why the subject was pinned up against the car – could be perceived as being excessive.
- The group agreed that there was an imbalance of power – the subject challenged the officer's professional standards.
- The panel agreed that the use of inappropriate language by the officer at the start of the video set the tone throughout the incident "don't take the p***"
- The group questioned the technique used in cuffing the subject from the front, rather than from the rear – development opportunity for the attending officer.
- One panel member believed that the officer could have addressed the vulnerability of the subject quicker than shown in the video clip – the panel identified that they were a juvenile and that potential safeguarding opportunities were perhaps missed.
- Overall, the panel agreed that the UoF was proportionate, legal and necessary. It was not deemed to have been excessive but the panel concluded that it could have been differently in the circumstances.

Conclusion and recommendations

Any specific feedback has been mentioned above; this section will consider organisational feedback and learning.

All participants were asked to complete a questionnaire after the session, 14 of the 15 panel members completed this. A summary of this feedback has been provided.

- The average enjoyment of the panel was 4.64/5, compared to an average of 4.83 across all previous sessions. This is a slight reduction but is still very high.

The panel were asked how aware they were of the processes behind Stop and Search and Use of Force.

- The panel reported an understanding for Stop and Search of 6.5/10 before the session and 8.79 after, an increase of 2.29.
- For Use of Force, this increased from 5.79/10 to 8.21 after the panel, an increase of 2.43.
- When asked how difficult they thought it was for an officer to conduct a search, this increased from 5.36/10 to 6.64, an increase of 1.29.

General feedback from the panel included reference to the sound issues experienced throughout the panel. This was mentioned in 8 of the 14 responses. The issues with sound and the venue were disappointing for participants and as organisers, having viewed the venue and been given assurances about other service users on the evening of the panel and about the technology that would be available. Moving forwards, the importance of the technology and the need for a sterile viewing environment will be impressed on the venue.

Other key feedback included:

- That the session was informative or well run, this was mentioned in 4 responses. This feedback is greatly appreciated, although there is still progress to be made.
- That a greater variety of cases would allow for a broader perspective, this is accepted, however the incidents are picked at random to ensure that there is transparency and to prevent any allegations of cherry-picking jobs to review. This was requested in two cases.



- One response asked for more context around the incidents reviewed. For Stop and Search, the grounds as written by the officer are provided, and for Use of Force, the incident is reviewed “blind”, as it would be if the panel came across the incident in the street. This is to ensure that we are capturing their initial thoughts on how the situation looks from the public’s perspective. In some UoF cases, further context was provided after the initial review. This need for perspective has to be balanced with the principles of disclosure, i.e., are we disclosing this information for a lawful purpose. Whilst it may assist the panel to have a “full” view of the circumstances, in many of the cases it was not proportionate or necessary to disclose specific intelligence, information about previous related incidents or any markers from our local RMS, PND or PNC.
- One response said that an independent chair might provide greater impartiality to the panel, as in some cases the actions of officers was defended by the Cleveland Police representatives. An independent chair is something that we are working towards, and this would assist in that aim. It is also important to note that part of the purpose of the panel is to address misconceptions and provide insight into the training and guidance that officers are given. Where a panel member provides an insight or an opinion that would be contrary to guidance or policy, or where the insight of either lived experience from an operational or formerly operational officer provides context, this will be provided. The learning that takes place through the scrutiny panels is two-way, and whilst constructive criticism and developmental feedback are key parts of policing, we as an organisation must push back against criticism or comments that are not grounded against public perspective or a legislative requirement.

Recommendations:

- Move towards an independently chaired model.
- Ensure officers understand the importance of clear communication to the subject, not only for the benefit of the subject, but to ensure that their interactions are understandable for the wider community. This was observed in a number of cases and the panel felt as though it benefited the cases where it was observed, and was missed where it was not.
- Produce some internal learning around de-escalation but ensure that this is weighted against giving officers the confidence to use force proactively and where appropriate, robustly. Several cases saw the panel ask why further efforts to de-escalate were not made and attempts to de-escalate may not have been appropriate. This does highlight a disconnect between what the public observe and the necessity for force to be applied. Escalation caused by the officers was also considered, with flippant comments causing a reaction in two cases where the subject was already irate, and one case included the complainant being close enough to the subject that their presence served to increase the agitation of that subject.
- Some questions were asked about the decisiveness of officer actions and whether some decisions (such as deciding to handcuff to the front rather than to the back) ultimately lengthened the use of force or created the potential for more injury. This is a difficult topic as ultimately the officers should be assessing the most course of action at any time based on the National Decision Model, and what may have been the best course of action at the start of an interaction may no longer be the best course of action shortly after. For example, attempting to handcuff to the rear originally, but being unable to do so, this attempt has proven to be tiring and in order to gain some control of



the situation, handcuffs have been applied to the front. This will be raised with the Training Department for their information and for a training response.

- Good practice was identified in many cases but the importance of good administrative cleanliness should not be understated, including further detail in the grounds of a Stop and Search added significant benefit with little extra work. This good practice is to be shared with the Force and positive feedback is to be provided.
- Consider some learning or communications targeted at the public, to demonstrate why some taught techniques that are used daily by officers are preferred. This was particularly prevalent when considering cross-gender use of unarmed skills, (especially ground or prone restraint) where injury potential is very low, but the perception was reported by the panel as being poor. Where an arrest is necessary and the suspect is resistive (whether this is active or passive resistance), grappling or engaging in unarmed skills will be necessary. This is safest for all parties when overwhelming force is applied, regardless of how many officers this takes. This was identified on several occasions as being controversial.

One point that should also be considered as part of this is “the minimum level of force required to **safely** achieve the lawful objective”. In cases where one officer may be able to physically overpower a subject, the injury potential to both parties is significantly higher than when a number of officers can gain total control over that subject. One officer may have to resort to PAVA, strikes or use of a baton, but a group of officers is usually able to take the suspect to the ground and achieve compliance through the unarmed skills but without resorting to strikes (pressure points, ground/prone restraint, non-compliant handcuffing, wrist/arm restraint). Being able to avoid striking, the injury potential is generally limited to minor cuts and abrasions from the floor.