

Terms of Reference Countywide Community Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel

Owner	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire	
Last Review	27/08/2020	Sara Miles
Next Review Date	31/08/2021	

1) Background

In April 2014 the Home Secretary recommended that all police forces should introduce the Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme in order to achieve greater transparency, community involvement in the use of stop and search powers, and to support a more intelligence-led approach, leading to better outcomes, such as an increase in the stop and search to positive outcome ratio.

As part of the Best Use of Stop and Search, and in accordance with The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Code of Practice A, the Home Secretary advised that all police forces in England and Wales have the arrangements in place for their Stop and Search records to be scrutinised by the communities they serve.

In line with the requirements of the Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme, the Community Scrutiny Panel will view redacted complaints made by the public about Stop and Search and will use this information only to support analysis of data and trends across the county.

2) Terms of Reference

The purpose of the Countywide Community Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel is to provide independent scrutiny of the use of Stop and Search across Hertfordshire, to provide feedback on Stop and Search practices, to provide a voice for community concerns, and to influence police actions. It is hoped that the Scrutiny Panel will improve public confidence and trust in the way in which Stop and Search is conducted and in the correct and proportionate exercise of Stop and Search powers.

2.1) Membership

The Countywide Panel will consist of approximately 20 members who live, work or study within the various districts and boroughs of Hertfordshire, who, as far as possible, represent the demographics of the County. Membership of the Panel will be reviewed yearly to ensure that the Panel continues to reflect that demographic. The members who have agreed to serve on the Panel are listed on the Police and Crime Commissioner's website (<http://www.hertscommissioner.org/stopsearch>) which will be updated periodically as changes need to be made.

It is expected that, once appointed, Panel members will attend at least six of the twelve monthly meetings per annum in order to ensure consistency in representation and updated knowledge.

The Operational Policing Command lead for Stop and Search within Hertfordshire Constabulary will attend the Panel meetings in order to enable questions to be asked directly by members and will be accountable for any issues and concerns which may arise.

2.2) Chair and Deputy Chair of the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel

The chair of the group will be a member of the Panel and will be appointed by the group and by no one else in order to demonstrate transparency and accountability. The appointment will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The Panel will also appoint a Deputy Chair who can deputise for the Chair should an absence arise. The appointment of the Deputy Chair will also be appointed yearly or at other times during the course of a year should the need arise. In order to increase resilience, the Panel will also appoint a Vice Chair who will act as Chair in the absence of both the Chair and Deputy Chair.

2.3) Meetings and frequency

The Countywide Community Scrutiny Panel will meet monthly for approximately two and a half hours at a public building within the County. Access to meetings during the year is made available to members of the public following prior notification to the OPCC.

During meetings Panel members will undertake: dip sampling and scrutiny of Stop and Search forms, a review of body worn stop search footage and scrutiny of summary data to ensure the use of stop and search powers across the County is PACE Code A compliant.

The Panel may also wish to undertake 'in-depth' dip sampling for each individual Community Safety Partnership (CSP) within the county in order to examine in more detail whether there are any concerns regarding the performance of certain districts or boroughs. In order to support this CSP Chief Inspectors will be invited to attend a minimum of one panel meeting per year to help drive improvements and change.

The Stop and Search Community Scrutiny Panel will review a random sample of Stop and Search forms and body worn video footage to identify any concerns, issues and areas of good practice and learning. The forms will be anonymised with the identity of the person stopped redacted. In relation to body worn footage, Panel members will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. In addition, the Panel will, at each meeting, be presented with the following data, which will include:

- Number of Stop Searches per month by Object of Search
- Gender of those stopped and searched for all stops
- Individual CSP data, Stop Searches per month, Arrests per month, and positive outcomes
- Officer defined and self-defined ethnicity, of those who are subject to Stop and Search broken down by district/borough and force as a whole
- Officer defined and self-defined ethnicity data showing number of arrests, positive disposals and stop/arrest ratio for each ethnic group.
- Reason for Search and subsequent arrest.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner secretariat, together with the Chair will ensure that Panel members are provided with minutes and actions from the meetings. All minutes and supporting documentation for the Panel will also be made publically available on the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner's website.

In circumstances where the panel are unable to meet in person, virtual meetings will be arranged using platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom. There will be some limitations on the data that can be shared virtually and due to data protection requirements some of the data will be more heavily redacted.

However these meetings will enable the panel to continue their scrutiny function. It may be necessary (for example, due to social distancing measures) to consider a 'hybrid' meeting with some of the panel joining in person and the remainder joining virtually.

3) Review and Monitoring arrangements

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually to ensure that they take into account any Force, Home Office/National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) recommendations or legislative changes.

Reports from the Scrutiny Panel regarding performance and compliance with Code of Practice A will be reviewed at the quarterly Community Safety Board, chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire and attended by Community Safety Partners.

The Scrutiny Panel shall produce an Annual Report upon the work which it has carried out in the preceding year. Reports will be produced and published on Hertfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner's website at the earliest practicable time following the end of the financial year.