

SCRUTINISING PERFORMANCE

STOP AND SEARCH

Background

In 2007 the Force were challenged by the Commission for Racial Equality over concerns about the high disproportionality of Stop and Search use within Sussex.

The Authority adding value

The Authority were concerned about the implications of the disproportionate use of Stop and Search and discussed in detail with the Chief Constable how oversight could be enhanced. The Chief Constable's ambition for a Street Intervention Working Group (SIWG) to address these issues was timely and fully supported by the Authority. The Authority's Lead Member for Diversity was a key member of that group from the start. The SIWG is also made up of representatives from all divisions and districts within Sussex. As a direct result of establishing the SIWG a number of issues were identified that needed to be addressed. These are:

- data accuracy
- concerns over the uptake of filling in of the required forms
- lack of knowledge from police officers on the powers afforded to them
- officer perception of the bureaucracy related to Stop and Search
- concerns over low levels of understanding relating to reputation and confidence that are impacted by using the Stop and Search powers

Sussex Police's Street Intervention Policy now clearly defines the appropriate occasions where Stop and Search powers are to be used, with a clear steer of the considerations of the fairness of operational policing. It also seeks to clarify, for operational officers, the impact upon reputation and confidence from Sussex Police of their actions. The SIWG continues to challenge district commanders on the performance of their own team and this information is then fed to Police Authority members on the district.

This oversight in Sussex of Stop and Search is considered to be good practice. As a demonstration of this recognition, at the ACPO, NPJA and APA Equality Conference in October 2009, Dr Laurie Bush, Chairman of the Authority, was invited to address the conference and share how Sussex Police Authority had contributed to the oversight of Stop and Search within the County. Dr Bush recommended the approach in Sussex to other police authorities, and there was considerable interest in the way that Sussex Police Authority had been engaged in this process.

The SIWG is now changing to reflect the increased levels of accountability and has been renamed the Street Intervention Accountability Meeting. The Authority's Lead Member for Diversity, Ms Emma Daniel, routinely attends this meeting and will be taking forward the role of the Authority in its oversight of this important element of policing which can directly impact on public confidence.

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