

Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel

Annual Report

January – December 2024



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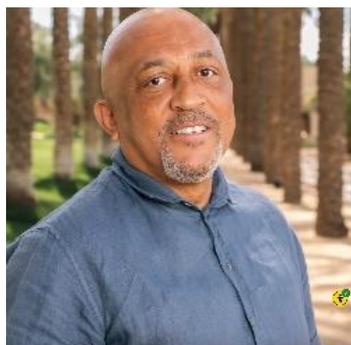
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FOREWORD BY DESMOND BROWN, CHAIR OF THE INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY OF POLICE POWERS PANEL (ISoPPP)



2024 has been a particularly challenging year for Avon and Somerset Police (ASP), the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), and all our communities across the Avon & Somerset region. It has also been the most demanding year for ISoPPP since its inception seven years ago. The tragic murders of children, the rise in serious youth violence, and incidents of violent disorder have placed immense pressure on policing and community safety. The increased use of Section 60 and Section 60AA powers has sparked critical conversations about the role of police interventions in tackling knife crime and serious violence.

In early 2024, ISoPPP suffered the profound loss of our Chair, David Woodward, who passed away after a short illness. David's unwavering dedication, leadership, and vision transformed police scrutiny in Avon and Somerset, setting a national benchmark for excellence. His impact and commitment to fairness and transparency continue to shape our work. In recognition of his contributions, David was posthumously awarded runner-up in the national Lord Ferrers Award in December 2024, honouring his exceptional volunteer service to policing.

Stepping into the role of Chair in June 2024 has been both an honour and a challenge, following in David's footsteps. I extend my sincere gratitude to Sally Fox, Rob Simmons, Diana Derrick, and the wider OPCC team for their unwavering support and administrative expertise, ensuring a seamless transition. I am also grateful to my Vice Chair, Adeela Shafi, and our dedicated panel members, who have stepped up to uphold ISoPPP's rigorous standards of scrutiny and challenge.

This year, we also welcomed a new Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Clare Moody, who has demonstrated a strong commitment to ISoPPP's mission. Under her leadership, we have continued to hold ASP to account, scrutinising the use of police powers with unwavering diligence. In 2024 alone, ISoPPP reviewed 191 cases, examined 240 hours of body-worn video (BWV) footage, and raised 13 key areas for discussion.

Some key areas of scrutiny this year included:

- **Use of Body-Worn Video (BWV):** Ongoing concerns about video quality have prompted continuous training and policy refinements.
- **Stop and Search Practices:** Our insights have influenced new policies and frontline training initiatives.
- **Compliant Handcuffing:** Reviews of proportionality and necessity have led to a comprehensive force review.
- **Racialised Impact of Strip Searches:** Following the Children's Commissioners Report, we highlighted that Black children were 2½ times more likely to be searched, advocating for fairer practices.
- **Mobile Phone Searches During Stop and Searches:** Despite legislative changes, this practice persisted in some areas, prompting us to incorporate it into ongoing training and monitoring.



- **Monitoring of S.163 Traffic Stops:** Disproportionate vehicle stops, and inadequate recording practices have been identified, with ASP's tactical lead now working to enforce stricter compliance.

Despite the challenges, ISoPPP remains steadfast in its mission to ensure accountability, fairness, and transparency in policing. In September 2024, I commissioned a comprehensive review of ISoPPP's work, led by panel member Jenny Staples. This review, which will be completed in September 2025, aims to reaffirm our foundational principles and enhance our level of scrutiny and challenge to meet community expectations. I would like to extend my thanks to Jenny and team of panel members for undertaking this review and their work so far.

This report reflects on our work throughout 2024, the progress we have made, and the challenges that lie ahead.



WHAT DOES THE PANEL DO?



The Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel (the Panel) has been appointed to scrutinise the use of police powers to ensure it is appropriate and proportionate. This includes reviewing the use of Taser, Stop and Search and other use of force, by reviewing Body Worn Camera (BWC) footage and reading police records of each incident.



The Panel of trained members acts on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) as a '*critical friend*' to Avon and Somerset Police by communicating local people's views on how the police use their powers. The ISoPP Panel convenes quarterly to scrutinise files and footage related to the police's exercise of their powers. The meeting is attended by the Panel members, representatives from Avon and Somerset Police, and representatives from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC).



The Panel is composed of 13 local people from a diverse range of backgrounds. The Panel started their work in June 2017 and meet quarterly, reviewing and scrutinising a sample of files and footage on the use of police powers.



The Panel:

- Independently scrutinises Avon and Somerset Police (the police) use of their powers.
- Aims to enhance the public's confidence in the work of the police.
- Ensures police openness and transparency.
- Acts as a '*critical friend*' to the police.
- Provides feedback on drafted police policy documents.
- Offers feedback, from a local person's perspective to the police on their use of police powers, particularly the use of force.
- View BWC footage of police incidents, including Stop and Search, feeding back good practice and areas for improvement.
- Observe police training.



In addition to special case reviews*, as standard, every four months (each quarter) the Panel chooses 50+ cases to scrutinise, reviewing the BWV on each case and preparing a report. Feedback is sent to the police with particular emphasis on identifying individual and organisational learning. The police response to learning is tracked by the Panel.

*A special case review is an incident/case that has gained a lot of media attention/public interest, causing public debate/questions around actions taken by the police.



WHAT DO OTHERS SAY ABOUT ISoPPP?



'As we move into the new year, the ISOPPP remains steadfast in their dedication, representing the diverse communities we serve and rigorously scrutinising the use of police powers. Their invaluable insights not only help us celebrate exemplary practices but also guide us in embracing meaningful learning opportunities where improvements can and need to be made.

Their commitment reinforces our shared mission of accountability, transparency, and excellence in service. This is how the legitimacy of the police is safeguarded.'

Chief Constable Sarah Crew



'The Panel has consistently demonstrated unwavering dedication in supporting my efforts to hold the police to account, while also serving as a crucial advisory body. This has been an exceptionally productive year for the Panel, and I would like to take this opportunity to once again extend my congratulations to the Chair, Desmond Brown, on his well-deserved appointment as MBE.

I remain deeply impressed by the professionalism and commitment the Panel members bring to their roles. Their tireless work continues to inspire, and I am profoundly grateful for their contributions. I offer my sincere thanks to each member, and I look forward to the continued progress and accomplishments of the Panel in 2025.'

Police and Crime Commissioner Clare Moody



'The last 12 months has demonstrated again how the work of ISOPPP has challenged the constabulary in the way we use our police powers, the way that we need to continuously reflect, learn and improve the way that we police all of our communities. I look forward to the year ahead particularly to make progress in this vital area of policing.

I would like to thank all the panel members for their time to challenge us to improve the way that we deliver policing.'

Chief Superintendent Deryck Rees, Head of Response

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS



191 cases scrutinised



13 themes identified for discussion



Over 240 hours of BWC footage viewed



Image from June Panel meeting 2024.



2024 Review:



Shortly after Christmas, the OPCC hosted a private memorial to honour David, attended by Panel members and his family.

The gathering was a heartfelt celebration of David's invaluable contributions since the inception of the ISoPPP. A Silver Birch tree was planted at Headquarters in his memory, symbolising both his lasting impact and enduring legacy.



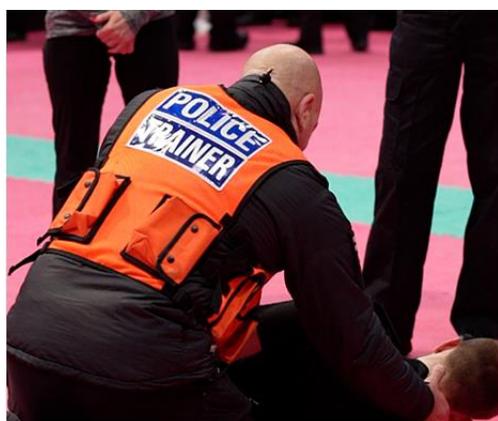
Last year, several Panel members attended to observe officers during their Personal Protection Safety Training (PPST). Here's what they had to say:

'I attended to observe a 2-day training event in which police officers refreshed their personal safety training. This provided invaluable insight into some of challenging situations that are faced by police officers on a day-to-day basis and how they are trained to address these challenges. The officers were split into small groups to role play scenarios in which they practised their use of force powers, each group was led by an experienced instructor. I was invited to join one of the small groups for one role play; this gave me some sense of how challenging these situations can be. This has assisted me as a panel member of ISOPPP, in providing scrutiny to Avon and Somerset Police of body worn video footage in which police officers are observed exercising their use of force and stop search powers'.



'I jumped at the opportunity to attend a police training session! The training was for new police officers and also served as an annual refresher for more experienced officers. They were divided into small groups, each with an experienced trainer to give them stop and search situations to act out and role play the trainers observed and later questioned the officers about the decisions they made during the role plays, and made sure they could justify those decisions by quoting the relevant legal basis for their actions. There was also training in practical skills, such as the most efficient way of helping a detained and handcuffed person from a prone position to standing up.

Observing this training was not only fascinating in its own right, but also gave me, as an ISOPPP volunteer, a better understanding of what is expected of officers having to exercise their stop and search powers, and how they practise the most appropriate responses in different situations. The trainers were friendly and helpful, and happy to answer our questions. It was a really interesting day!'





2024 Review Continued...

ISoPPP Said	ASP Did
<p>Compliant handcuffing - what is the definition of compliant handcuffing and is there a need for this if someone is being cooperative - the Panel commented that this should negate the need for handcuffs.</p>	<p><i>Through highlighting this in ISoPPP, a Task and Finish Group was set up led by an Inspector.</i></p> <p><i>As it stands, there is no National definition for compliant handcuffing. We are currently understanding how this fits into the national picture to ensure that any potential changes would align to prevent any conflict.</i></p> <p><i>Stakeholders from multiple departments are meeting to discuss the challenges with compliant handcuffing and the impact that it has on the community. Work in this area is ongoing.</i></p>
<p>Bodyworn Video - a common item raised at each quarter. The Panel requested to know what is being done to improve the quality and commentary on BWV.</p>	<p><i>Regarding the current general compliance of turning on of BWCs at incidents – we are amending our force policy to provide clear mandated clarity of turning on. This will be amongst other updates for 2025 and will be submitted to legal in late spring. With backlogs it is likely the updated policy will not be approved for 6 months.</i></p> <p><i>In the meantime and post this it has been agreed that we will be enforcing the update with local leaders to improve compliance.</i></p>
<p>Stop and Search: The Panel highlighted that officers should not be repeatedly asking/telling an individual to provide their personal details at a Stop and Search, when there is no requirement for the individual to share them.</p> <p>Cannabis being the only grounds for a stop and search is not good enough and the Panel felt that this needed to be reviewed.</p>	<p><i>The feedback from the ISoPPP has been invaluable and largely informed the new ASP Stop and Search procedure.</i></p> <p><i>The new procedure covers new receipt pads for stop and search receipts, the fact that the presence of a smell of cannabis is not sufficient on its own to provide reasonable grounds for a search and also the procedure details the difference between persistence and making a request for someone to provide their details (this is also highlighted in officer in person training).</i></p> <p><i>The Panel should start to see a difference when reviewing footage through 2025.</i></p>
<p>The use of telling people - <u>repeatedly</u> - to 'calm down' does not have a positive effect, it escalates the situation and often leads to force being used as a result.</p>	<p><i>This does not form part of the training and as a result, this has been shared with the Operational Training Team. This will feed into upcoming officers training to make officers more aware of tone and language used at incidents.</i></p>
<p>Feedback; there is no update as to what happens with the feedback provided by ISoPPP to ASP; it feels there is incomplete communication and reassurance of action taken by ASP. This has partly resulted in the formation of a sub-group from the Panel that is examining the current processes of ISoPPP and ways to improve moving forward.</p>	<p><i>ASP positively received and welcomed the review of current ISoPPP processes and agree that the feedback loop needs to be improved. This will be an ongoing piece of work over 2025.</i></p>



ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING TRACKER

Since September 2021, as part of their ongoing work to scrutinise policing, the Panel have identified key organisational learning areas for Avon and Somerset Police. The Panel continue to review, track, and scrutinise how lessons identified are managed. To date, there have been 13 key areas of focus that have been flagged to the Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

Date	Organisational Learning Identified	A&S Police Update	Status
Dec 21 - Dec 24	<p>BWV SWITCHED ON LATE, OBSCURED, INADEQUATE OR NOT SAVED AS EVIDENTIAL.</p> <p>This has been an area of concern for some time, highlighted by the Panel. Data from the last 2 quarters shows a decrease in the adequacy of footage. A new BWV policy has been developed, albeit the level of engagement with the new policy cannot be measured. This area will continue to be monitored, and feedback given to the police on improving the use.</p> <p><i>This matter is to be raised at the March Panel meeting in 2025</i></p>	<p><i>Unfortunately, we are unlikely to see significant change until the issuing of new cameras. The current contract is not up until 2026, so not likely to be a considerable change until then.</i></p> <p><i>This will be a huge project to replace around 4000 units which is already in motion. There are a couple of hundred cameras coming up to their expired warranty, therefore the plan is to replace with a batch of new cameras which will be issued to all officers working from the main Bristol station (Base 2). This will provide compliance in the short term for our Bristol based officers.</i></p>	KIV - Ongoing scrutiny
Dec 21 - Dec 24	<p>STANDARD PRACTICE HANDCUFFING A COMPLIANT PERSON AT A STOP AND SEARCH.</p> <p>This is another area that has been kept in view since December 2021. It was established at the June Panel meeting, that Nationally, there is no definition for the term compliant handcuffing. Work has been ongoing for some time around the use of handcuffs and a task and finish group was set up to look into this area of business, specifically in relation to Stop and Search. Therefore, an update is required in relation to any outcomes so far in this area of business, and what is the current picture/ongoing work around compliant handcuffing?</p>	<p><i>This work remains ongoing, and we are currently understanding how this fits into the national picture to ensure that any potential changes would align to prevent any conflict. There are no specific outcomes at this time.</i></p> <p><i>Stakeholders from multiple departments are meeting to discuss the challenges with compliant handcuffing and the impact that it has on the community. It is important that the current ways of working are fully understood to draw out any root causes which can be addressed. Our data has also highlighted a specific cohort of officers within Bristol who may handcuff more frequently than others, therefore, we have commissioned a specific focus on this area also.</i></p> <p><i>Lastly, we are reviewing other data that we possess in relation to arrests and our internal peer review findings to work towards sustainable change in this area.</i></p>	KIV - Ongoing scrutiny
Jun-24	<p>THE PRACTICE OF SEIZING MOBILE PHONES, OR VIEWING THE CONTENT, UNDER SECTION 23(2)(c) MISUSE OF DRUGS ACT 1971.</p> <p>This matter was initially closed as being dealt with as ASP stated: <i>From August 2022 officers will cease to use Sec 23 to justify seizing phones at a Stop and Search. This applies until and if the search results in an arrest.</i> However, some recent case reviews have identified some officers searching mobile phones of detainees as part of a Stop Search, therefore the concern is being placed back onto the organisational tracker.</p>	<p><i>Section 7.18 of the new Stop and Search Procedure for the Avon and Somerset Constabulary states: Using s.23(c) Misuse of Drugs Act to look through phones:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>ASP does not support the use of s.23(c) Misuse of Drugs Act to look through a person's phone under stop and search powers.</i> - <i>If officer suspects evidence of an offence is on a person's mobile phone or electronic device, they should consider seizure powers under s.19 PACE and complete the interrogation of the device using recognised and approved methods.</i> - <i>There is no ability to require a person to provide their password under Stop and search powers.</i> 	KIV - Ongoing scrutiny
Jun-24	<p>THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LANGUAGE, VOLUME, TONE AND CONTENT WHEN SPEAKING TO A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC, PARTICULARLY IN ESCALATION/DE-ESCALATION SITUATIONS.</p> <p>This matter was closed off in 2023 after significant improvements and good practice was recognised by the Panel. Officers across the force received de-escalation training. ASP provided the following: <i>We have now fully incorporated situational based training for yearly refreshers in Public and Personal safety Training and we believe that this outcome is linked to the new training.</i> Over the last few quarters, the consistently used 'calm down' approached used by officers has aggravated and escalated a number of situations. Therefore, this matter has been re-added to the tracker.</p>	<p><i>At present, there is not any specific training on de-escalation per se as this is encompassed within the situational based PPST training. (This is also now offered to new recruits instead of the previous line drills).</i></p> <p><i>Having attended the situational training and observed other sessions, I can confirm that telling someone to 'calm down' repeatedly does not form part of the training and I wonder if this is part of an innate response by officers when faced with challenging or confrontational situations in the live environment. I will raise this issue with the Operational Training Team and ask that this is shared with the training staff to ensure that it is raised during training.</i></p>	KIV - Ongoing scrutiny
Dec 21 - Dec 24	<p>STOP AND SEARCH CONCERNS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of consistency explaining the availability of a S&S receipt and how the person can access it. - The smell of cannabis alone does not provide the grounds for a S&S. - At an EIP Search, BWV on audio only should be activated. - Lack of adequacy of grounds for a S&S. - Officers persistence in asking detained person for their personal details after they declined to give them. 	<p><i>Throughout 2024, a new Stop and Search Policy was developed and implemented across Avon and Somerset. The majority of officers have had training on the new policy and from December 2024 onward, the Panel should start to see the impact of the training when they review their case selection.</i></p>	KIV - Ongoing scrutiny



Further information about the Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel (ISoPPP)

Further information about the ISoPPP can be viewed through the following link:

[Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel | OPCC for Avon and Somerset \(avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk)

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