

# **Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel**



**2025 ANNUAL REPORT**

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## Panel Overview

The Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel (ISoPPP) reviews the use of police powers to ensure they are appropriate and proportionate. This includes examining Taser deployment, Stop and Search, and other uses of force by assessing Body Worn Video (BWV) footage and police records.

Acting on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), the Panel serves as a 'critical friend' to Avon and Somerset Police, reflecting community views and promoting transparency. Meetings are held quarterly and attended by Panel members, police representatives, and the Office of the PCC.

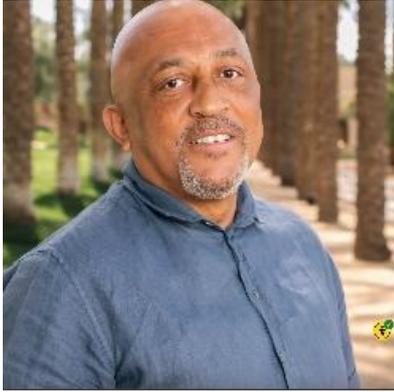
### Who We Are

The Panel comprises of local residents from diverse backgrounds. Established in June 2017, members are trained to independently scrutinise police powers and provide constructive feedback.

### What We Do

- Review BWV footage and case files on Stop and Search and use of force.
- Provide feedback to improve practice and policy.
- Observe police training and advise on draft policies.
- Conduct special case reviews where incidents attract significant public interest.
- Track police responses to identified learning.





## Message from the Chair

It is a privilege to present this year's report for the Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel (ISoPPP). This has been a year of reflection, reform, and renewed purpose.

At the close of 2024, the Panel subcommittee undertook a comprehensive internal review. That process was not cosmetic. It involved honest conversations between the Panel, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), and Avon and Somerset Constabulary. There was clear recognition across all parties that scrutiny must be meaningful, rigorous, and rooted in public confidence.

As a result, we have refreshed our Terms of Reference and strengthened our meeting structure, including the introduction of a dedicated feedback meeting. The new process began in December 2025, with the first formal feedback session held in January 2026. Early signs are encouraging. The emphasis now is not only on identifying learning, but on improving how feedback is received, embedded, and evidenced by Avon and Somerset Police. Scrutiny must lead to change; otherwise it risks becoming symbolic.

This year also marked a significant development in policy and practice. In July 2025, Avon and Somerset Police introduced a formal definition of "compliant handcuffing." For some time, the absence of a clear local or national definition had been raised repeatedly by Panel members as an issue when reviewing cases. In response, a task and finish group was established, resulting in a definition that provides greater clarity for officers and more consistent standards for scrutiny. This is a tangible example of how independent oversight can directly shape operational practice.

At the same time, our case reviews have highlighted a concerning theme: the increasing presence of adultification. Adultification bias, where children are perceived as more mature or culpable than their developmental stage allows, undermines safeguarding and risks disproportionate responses. When children are treated as adults, vulnerability can be minimised, empathy reduced, and protective responsibilities weakened. The Panel has identified this as a priority area for learning and improvement. We will continue to monitor how this issue is addressed across policing and safeguarding partnerships throughout 2026. **Children must be treated as children**, consistently and without exception.

Our work this year has included detailed reviews of body worn video, emergency calls, stop and search encounters, and use of force incidents. Through constructive challenge, the Panel has contributed to developments such as the new Stop and Search Policy, helping to ensure that it better reflects principles of fairness, accountability, and community legitimacy.

In November 2025, ISoPPP was honoured to be recognised nationally as Runners-Up for the National OPCC Volunteer Award at the Home Office's Lord Ferrers Awards. This recognition belongs to our members, who give their time, expertise, and lived experience to ensure that police powers are exercised lawfully, proportionately, and with respect for the communities they serve. Independent scrutiny is not a formality; it is a cornerstone of democratic accountability.

The year has also brought change within the Panel itself. We have said goodbye to several long-standing members whose dedication has shaped the Panel's development, and we extend our sincere thanks for their service. Following a recruitment process, we are pleased to welcome six new members, three of whom joined at the end of 2025. This renewal strengthens our diversity of perspective and reinforces our commitment to representing communities across Avon and Somerset.

Looking ahead, 2026 will focus on embedding the revised governance arrangements, strengthening communication with the Constabulary and the public, and increasing the visibility of our work.

Transparency must be active, not passive. Communities should know how police powers are being scrutinised, what themes are emerging, and how learning is translated into practice.

Our role remains clear: to provide independent, community led scrutiny that challenges where necessary, recognises good practice where evident, and ultimately contributes to fairer and more accountable policing.

Independent oversight is not about opposition; it is about integrity. It is about ensuring that the exercise of police powers, particularly those that directly affect liberty, dignity, and safety—remains anchored in legality, proportionality, and public trust.

I thank all Panel members, our partners, and the communities we serve for their continued commitment to that shared purpose.

## Senior Leader Comments:



**Police and Crime Commissioner Clare Moody**

*The Panel has consistently demonstrated unwavering dedication in supporting my efforts to hold the police to account, in their role as a crucial advisory body. This year has been exceptionally productive, marked not only by the Panel's ongoing commitment but also by its proactive approach to improvement. The Panel undertook an internal review of its own processes to strengthen the way it works, enhance feedback mechanisms, and promote greater transparency in policing.*

*I am also delighted to highlight that the Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel (ISoPPP) achieved national recognition as runners-up at the prestigious Lord Ferrers Awards. This is an outstanding achievement and a testament to the Panel's hard work and impact in promoting accountability and trust in policing.*

*I remain deeply impressed by the professionalism and commitment the Panel members bring to their roles. Their tireless efforts continue to inspire, and I am profoundly grateful for their contributions to my work of scrutinising Avon and Somerset Police. I offer my sincere thanks to each member and look forward to continuing to work with them throughout 2026.*



**Chief Constable Sarah Crew QPM**

*This year's report highlights how the ISoPPP continues to shape better policing, through constructive challenge, rigorous scrutiny, and a genuine partnership approach.*

*Their work drives real improvement, supports accountability, and helps ensure our use of police powers remains both proportionate and community-centred. I look forward to building on this progress together in 2026.*



**Operational Performance Superintendent Matt Ebbs, Response Policing**

*As we enter a new year, the ISoPPP continues to play a vital role in shaping how we serve and protect our communities. Their independent scrutiny, utilising the lived experiences of the people we serve, ensures that our use of police powers is continually reviewed and improved. The collaborative panel-based approach helps us recognise where our officers are getting it right, while highlighting where we must improve and learn. I am grateful to every panel member for their dedication and willingness to work with us to deliver outstanding service to the public, and I look forward to continuing this important work in the year ahead.*

## 2025: Insights, Challenges and Achievements:

### Internal Review

Towards the end of 2024 and into 2025, the Panel initiated an internal review led by three Panel members and the Chair. This involved substantial background work and a series of meetings between the Panel, the OPCC, and the Constabulary.

Importantly, all parties demonstrated a shared commitment to strengthening the relationship between the Panel and the police, promoting good practice, and identifying areas where learning and improvement were needed. The review aimed to enhance the quality and impact of case reviews, ensuring the Panel continues to act effectively on behalf of local communities across Avon and Somerset by driving transparency, improving confidence in policing, and posing necessary challenge. Following this work, a revised Terms of Reference was developed and agreed, alongside a refreshed meeting structure that includes the introduction of an additional 'feedback meeting'. While the new approach is still in its early stages, with the first meetings held in December 2025 and January 2026, the initial indications are positive.

Final refinements are being made, but 2026 is expected to see strengthened communication with both the police and the public, alongside a renewed focus on raising the ISoPPP's profile and the visibility of its work.

### Lord Ferrers Awards

In November 2025, the Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel (ISoPPP) was nationally recognised as the Runners-Up for the OPCC Volunteer Award at the Home Office's Lord Ferrers Awards.

This acknowledgment reflects the Panel's continued commitment to providing independent, community-led scrutiny of police powers.

Throughout the year, members have reviewed body-worn video, emergency calls, stop and search encounters, and use of force incidents, offering constructive challenge to improve fairness, transparency, and public confidence.

Their work has directly influenced developments such as the new Stop and Search Policy, ensuring it is more accountable and aligned with community expectations.



### Recruitment

Last year, recruitment was opened for the ISoPPP, resulting in the successful onboarding of six new members and bringing total membership to 17.

The new members bring a broad range of knowledge, experience, and perspectives from diverse professional and community backgrounds, as well as a wider age range that further strengthens the Panel's ability to reflect the communities of Avon and Somerset.

Although they joined during the implementation of new processes, all six members have quickly engaged with the work and have been warmly welcomed by existing Panel members.

## **Adultification**

Adultification refers to a form of bias in which a child is perceived or treated as being more mature, autonomous, or responsible than they are developmentally capable of being.

Within policing and partnership safeguarding contexts, this can lead to children being viewed through an adult lens, resulting in reduced empathy, inappropriate expectations, and a diminished safeguarding response.

Adultification can influence how risk is assessed, how behaviours are interpreted, and the proportionality of police or partner-agency actions.

Recognising and mitigating adultification bias is essential to ensuring that children are consistently treated as children, and that decisions relating to their welfare, vulnerability, and protection remain grounded in their developmental stage and rights.

The Panel reviewed a number of cases and noted an increase in the presence and impact of adultification. They have highlighted the need for strengthened learning and practice development in this area and will continue to monitor progress and emerging themes throughout 2026.

## **Compliant Handcuffing**

In July 2025, Avon and Somerset Police introduced a new definition for “compliant handcuffing.” Prior to this, there was no national or local definition, and the issue was repeatedly raised during ISoPPP meetings when reviewing cases. In response, a task-and-finish group was established to examine the matter, resulting in the development and implementation of this new definition last year. This has provided greater clarity and consistency for both officers and scrutiny processes moving forward.

*‘The application of handcuffs to a cooperative person. The use of handcuffs (as an intentional use of force) is required to ensure the safety of those involved and/or to prevent escape.*

*The decision is made based on additional factors such as subject/officer impact factors, prior or specific knowledge/intelligence, or other identified reasons. The rationale must be justified and documented by the individual applying the force, and justification for the use of handcuffs should be explained to the person as soon as practicable.’*



## The Panel Said....ASP Did:

ISoPPP Said	ASP Did
<p><b>Compliant Handcuffing:</b> The question around why someone was handcuffed if they were compliant has consistently been raised.</p>	<p><i>In July 2025, we introduced a new definition for the term 'compliant handcuffing'. This will look to provide officers with clarity and consistency for decision making in how and when to use handcuffs. (The new definition can be seen on the previous page.)</i></p>
<p><b>Bodyworn Video:</b> A common theme of footage not being switched on soon enough, being turned off before the conclusion of an interaction or having the view obscured.</p>	<p><i>Throughout 2025 ASP implemented a process for the additional review of all Stop and Search incidents complemented by refreshed learning and communications to frontline officers. Alongside this a new phased system for managing BWV policy non-compliance was introduced to embed positive practice. This has seen significant improvements in the correct use of BWV.</i></p> <p><i>Additionally, ASP is involved in the procurement of new BWV cameras which are due in late 2026. These will ensure the latest technology is available to our officers and make the process of capturing best evidence as easy as possible.</i></p>
<p><b>Feedback:</b> 2025 saw the conclusion of the Panel's internal review, with an improved method of providing ASP feedback on SS and UoF cases. The review has provided an improved structure allowing for more accountability as to where the feedback goes, how it is delivered and recorded.</p>	<p><i>This is a really positive step toward ensuring the invaluable feedback of the panel is captured and acted upon by ASP. The creation of the feedback loop has been a collaborative exercise and ASP are committed to using the ISoPPP reviews to improve practice. The first use of the new feedback loop is due in early 2026.</i></p>
<p><b>Officer Behaviour (professionalism/demeanour/language):</b> Questions have been raised over the course of the year in relation to the above, which will be continually monitored and placed on the Organisational Learning Tracker. It is believed that ASP are still incorporating the use of tone and language into their personal safety training.</p>	<p><i>The Golden Thread of de-escalation and communication runs through all scenario-based PPST training, encompassing both Recruit and Refresher platforms. Models include Betaris Box, Leaps, CUDSA. All actions are linked to the National Decision Model.</i></p> <p><i>The intrinsic link between the Code of Ethics, it's principles and guidance on behaviour and the other element of the model is emphasised throughout the training.</i></p>
<p><b>Adultification:</b> The Panel saw a couple of Special Case Reviews this year whereby a number of concerns were raised on young children being treated as adults, and therefore not being safeguarded/looked after effectively. This is something that the Panel are going to be keeping an eye on as we move into 2026.</p>	<p><i>It is vital that all young people are treated with respect and that we effectively safeguard them. ASP notes that there have been incidents where this has not been done to the standard expected and we have worked closely with the panel to understand how we can improve.</i></p> <p><i>Our safeguarding report creation for young people has increased significantly over the last year, representing more young people being flagged for support and partner agency awareness. Furthermore, throughout 2025 we have refreshed the awareness of all frontline patrol staff through a day's training in key safeguarding topics.</i></p>

# Organisational Learning Tracker:

THEME/CATEGORY	SUMMARY OF ISSUE	TIMELINE OF ACTIONS	CURRENT POSITION	STATUS	TREND
<b>BWV Adequacy</b>	BWV often not activated early enough or incomplete.	2021; Initial concern raised 2022; Pre-Record function introduced 2023; BWV Tactical Lead Appointed 2024; Adequacy still decreasing 2026; As above	New policy and new cameras planned.	 Ongoing	Concern increasing
<b>Compliant Handcuffing</b>	Inconsistent understanding and use.	2021; Initial concern raised 2022; Issue flagged again 2023; Increase in incidents where compliant handcuffing used 2024; No National or local definition 2025; New definition implemented in A&S	Definition published July 2025.	 Ongoing	Stable
<b>Stop &amp; Search Concerns</b>	Receipts not always offered. Lack of adequacy on Grounds. Smell of Cannabis only reason for S&S. Issues around EIP - audio only should be activated.	2021; Initial concern raised 2022; Concerns increasing 2023; As above 2024; Start of new S&S Policy 2025; New Policy issued across A&S	New S&S Policy; Pronto receipts.	 Ongoing	Improving
<b>Phone Seizure under S23</b>	Officers sometimes searched phones unlawfully.	2024; Initial concern re-raised 2025; New S&S Policy created	Re-added to tracker2024. New S&S Policy delivered to all officers.	 Ongoing	Resurfacing
<b>Adultification</b>	Number of occasions where young teens have been treated as adults - safeguarding missed.	2025; Initial concern raised	Continual monitoring into 2026, A&S more aware of this issue.	 Ongoing	Concern increasing
<b>Communication/De-Escalation</b>	Often telling someone repeatedly to calm down fuels highly emotive situations, and tone used can often be accusatory/unhelpful.	2024; Initial concern re-raised 2025; Matter addressed in PPST Training	Language/Tone/De-Escalation techniques being revisited at PPST Training.	 Ongoing	Resurfacing
<b>Feedback Loop</b>	Not all feedback being shared/actioned effectively. Want an improved method of showcasing what the ISOPPP does and how the feedback is delivered.	2023; Initial concern raised 2024; Internal review conducted 2025; Internal review completed, implementation of new structure	December 2025 was the first way of the Panel working under the new format. Still in implementation phase.	 Ongoing	Stable

## 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.independentscrutiny.gov.uk/panels/avonandsomerset-pcc)

### Get in touch

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