

Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel



Quarterly Report

Panel Meeting: 11th of December 2025

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Panel Overview

The Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel (ISoPPP) 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 Video (BWV) 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).

Who are the Panel?



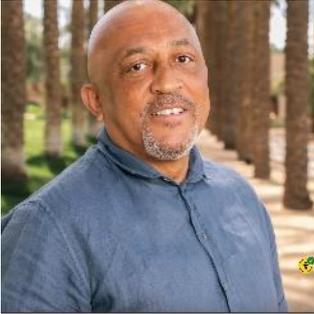
The Panel is composed of 16 local people from a diverse range of backgrounds. The Panel started their work in June 2017 and meet quarterly, reviewing and scrutinising a sample of files and footage on the use of police powers.

What does the Panel do?

- 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*, the Panel meets once each quarter to review 15 randomly selected cases and submit feedback. This feedback is collated and passed to the police. Thirty days later, the Panel reconvenes for a short follow-up session to discuss the feedback provided and to review how the police are responding to the learning identified.

*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.



Message from the Chair

December marked an important milestone for the Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel, as we convened our first meeting under the newly refreshed Terms of Reference. This was more than a procedural adjustment; it signalled the beginning of a strengthened and more structured approach to scrutiny, designed to improve both the quality of our review work and the impact of our feedback.

At this meeting, the Panel reviewed 15 cases and were divided into smaller groups of three to enable more detailed and focused examination. This revised format encouraged deeper discussion, greater consistency in our observations, and clearer identification of learning themes across cases. The approach reflects our commitment to moving beyond surface level commentary and towards more analytical, evidence-based scrutiny.

Police representatives were present throughout the session to support the review of body worn video footage and to respond to members' questions. Their attendance allowed for immediate clarification of operational context and decision-making rationale, helping to ensure that our challenge was informed, proportionate, and constructive. The presence of officers does not dilute independence; rather, when managed properly, it strengthens accountability and transparency.

The meeting also included a Special Case Review. These reviews provide an opportunity to examine complex or sensitive incidents in greater depth, identifying not only individual learning points but also broader systemic issues. Special case work remains a critical component of the Panel's role, ensuring that significant matters receive the level of scrutiny they warrant.

As the first session under the revised framework, December set the tone for the year ahead. The new structure is designed to sharpen our focus, improve the clarity of our feedback, and ensure that community scrutiny continues to drive meaningful improvement in how police powers are exercised across Avon and Somerset.

Special Case Review

○ Background:

On the afternoon of the 28th of October, Police were called to Gloucester Road area in Bristol, following reports of a male in possession of a large butcher's style knife, sitting at a bus stop. The male was described as a black male wearing a red hoody and red trousers. It was stated that there was another witness, and CCTV also confirmed seeing the subject in possession of a large knife. An armed authority was subsequently given due to the potential risk of the weapon. The subject then got on a bus.

The bus was located as it entered Southmead Hospital and stopped at the bus stop.

Officers could see a male wearing all red sat at the rear of the bus, who appeared to be the subject. The bus was very busy with members of the public.

Officers have entered the bus and detained the male. Once detained, the male subject was identified as a 15-year-old. He was in possession of a large toy/Halloween prop knife.

The child was compliant and understood actions taken. Police wanted to return him home and speak with his parents. Unfortunately, both parents were at work at the time of the incident and live separately. Police agreed to return the child home but wanted to inform his parents. Police subsequently called his father and explained the situation. Father was understanding of the situation and informed of the actions taken by the police. The child was returned home by local uniformed officers.

There were no additional concerns in relation to this incident.

The Panel reviewed this case as it exhibited several parallels with an incident previously examined and included within the June Report.

○ Panel Feedback:

<u>Case Ref:</u>	<u>Total Responses</u>	<u>Red</u>	<u>Amber</u>	<u>Green</u>
Dec 25 - Case 1	11	0	3	8

The case received no red gradings from those that viewed the case, with predominantly green gradings.

○ Key comments/observations made by the Panel:

- *This is exactly like the Stapleton Road incident. Do we have details of the call that went into the call centre? As this set the context of their (police) response. What we learnt from Stapleton Road was two young boys were held at gunpoint, but it was a toy, and they were on their way to a party. I want to know what the call was that came into the office. This is the second time this has happened. Last time the call handler was leading the caller. Halloween does increase the time where people carry toys, and this reflects the previous case.*
- *If we get police to judge going out to attend calls, we will cause further issues.*
- *Further conversation is needed for how the handling of the 'show your f-ing hands'. Not the decision to deploy but the decisions during handling need to be looked at.*
- *I marked this as Amber. Use of language – was very unnecessary and would not assist, who is in command of this situation and what is the strategy, and then the safety of the bus and thinking about*

the safety of those other people. I was surprised that they did not give that boy of the words of advice. They were flashing the knife around and it was not very professional.

- *There are issues of language and there have been mixed views. It can be deemed acceptable even though it's not (swearing). In professional environments you would not normally swear, and policing is a professional environment.*
- *Officer was very calm with suspect. Explains reason for search. Officer apologises for being a bit rough/heavy handed at the outset.*
- *The officers did a good job when calmly evacuating passengers (including children) from the bus in an intense situation. Other than the initial swearing at the male, the officers spoke to the subject and his father in a reassuring and respectful manner.*

○ **Key comments/observations made by Police Representatives:**

- *As a tactical firearms commander and in respect of who was in possession of the knife, you would deploy firearms officers based on the level of threat. It doesn't matter where in the area or who is in the possession of that knife, it is based on what we are told and how we assess the situation. There is often limited information when we deploy firearms officers.*
- *Face coverings are discretionary. There is learning from this aspect and from the deployment – the deployment is because of the threat and nothing else.*
- *When language of that nature is used, it is important that the documentation clearly explains the rationale behind it. This should include why the officer chose to use that language and what outcome they intended to achieve.*
- *In certain circumstances, an officer may decide to use strong or commanding language to gain control of a dangerous situation. If they can justify that decision, it could be considered a legitimate and proportionate tactical choice aimed at de-escalating or safely managing the incident.*

December Case Categories

Each quarter, the Panel will identify several case categories for scrutiny focus when reviewing cases under Use of Force and Stop and Search. A full list of cases that fall under each category type are then requested from the police.

Use of Force

1. Compliant Handcuffing of members of the public during a stop and search by race and gender
2. The use of taser on Black, Asian or other racially minoritised members of the community
3. The use of baton or PAVA (Pelargonic Acid Vanillyl Amide) on members of the public over the age of 18, including race and gender overview
4. EIP searches for all ages of persons

Stop and Search

1. Complaints by a member of the public against police relating to Stop and Search
2. EIP searches for all ages of persons
3. Effected after a S163** vehicle stop by officers with grounds
4. Ethnicity and grounds for moderate-high repeated searches (person stopped 3 times or more in a 12-month period)
5. BRAG*** Tool used in relation to a use of force incident or stop search

*EIP = Exposure of Intimate parts, formally Strip Search

**[Road Traffic Act 1988 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

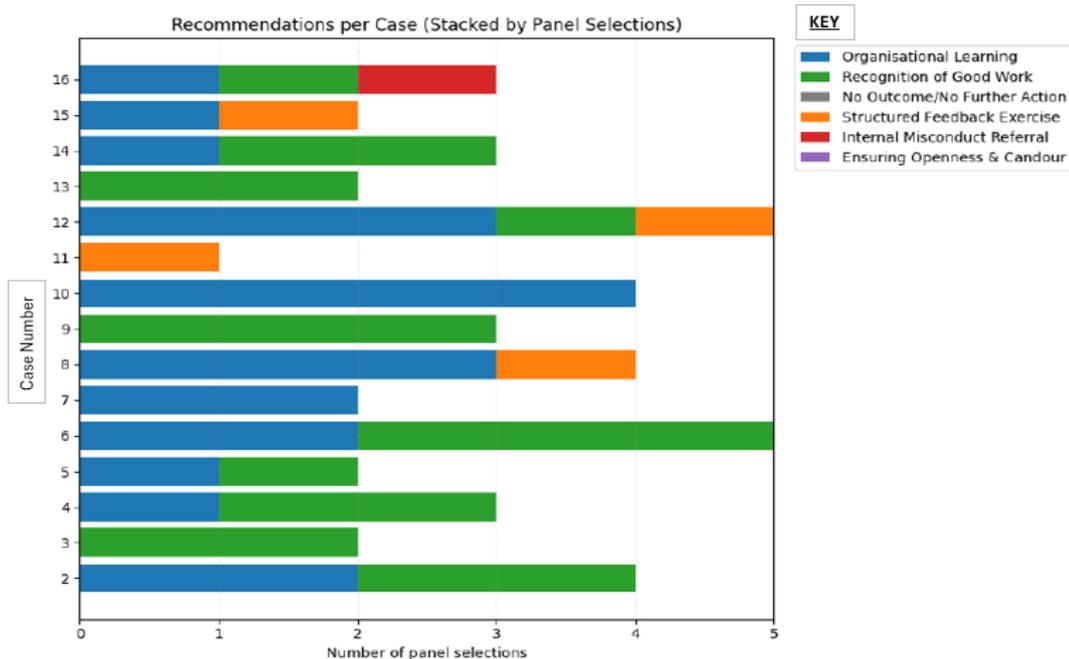
***BRAG = Blue, Red, Amber Green risk assessment vulnerability tool. A BRAG is required for each person or people that has/have a specific vulnerability or risk. It is used to guide officers to record the most relevant information to help safeguard vulnerable people.

December Case Reviews

December marked the first meeting held under the newly reformed process, following an internal review conducted by ISoPPP. Fifteen cases were randomly selected, covering the case categories listed above. The Panel was divided into three groups (with a minimum of three members per group), and each group reviewed five pieces of Body-Worn Video, providing scrutiny and feedback. A new feedback form has also been developed, which includes rating the respectfulness of an officer/officers and a dedicated section for the Panel to provide recommendations on how they believe a case should be handled.

A follow-up Feedback Meeting took place 30 days after the initial December meeting. However, due to several factors, including difficulties in reviewing all videos during December, annual leave, and the Christmas/bank holiday period, the police experienced delays in receiving the full set of feedback. Despite this, we are assured that the recommendations made are being examined and that appropriate actions are being taken.

Below is a snapshot of data from the cases reviewed in December.



Cases vs. panel responses

- There were 15 distinct cases reviewed.
- There were 54 panel responses in total (an average of 3–4 panel members per case).
- There were 21 counts of panel responses that ticked *Organisational Learning* as a recommended action for various cases.

Respectfulness and Listening Ratings Analysis.

Respectfulness Ratings

Higher respectfulness scores reflected officers showing courtesy, empathy, and calm tone especially with vulnerable individuals.

Active Listening Scores

Officers with higher listening scores avoided interruptions, summarised key points, and adapted to vulnerable individuals' needs.

Lower Ratings Implications

Lower ratings correlated with dismissive tone, ignoring concerns, and mechanical procedural communication.

Organisational Learning Tracker

THEME/CATEGORY	SUMMARY OF ISSUE	TIMELINE OF ACTIONS	CURRENT POSITION	STATUS	TREND
BWV Adequacy	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
Compliant Handcuffing	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
Stop & Search Concerns	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
Phone Seizure under S23	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
Adultification	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
Communication/De-Escalation	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
Feedback Loop	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.opcc.gov.uk/regions/avonandsomerset-pcc)

Get in touch

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