

# Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel



**Quarterly Report**

**Panel Meeting: 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2026**

**Feedback Meeting: 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2026**

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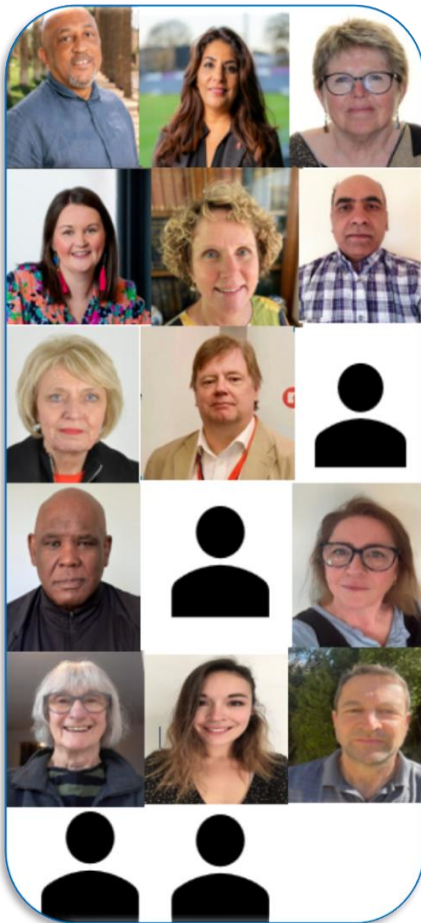
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## Panel Overview

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 17 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. Approximately forty-two 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 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

*Following the positive start in December, this quarter marked the Panel's second meeting operating under the refreshed Terms of Reference. Building on the foundations established at the previous session, the revised format continues to demonstrate its value. The dedicated viewing day ran smoothly, with panel members providing encouraging feedback on both the structure and the opportunity it affords for more focused, in-depth scrutiny. The approach is helping to embed consistency in our observations while supporting more confident and robust challenge.*

*A notable feature of this quarter's work was the consideration of two Special Case Reviews, which were reviewed in advance and then discussed collectively during the feedback session. This process enabled the Panel to engage in more reflective and meaningful discussion, drawing out both case-specific learning and wider themes. We anticipate an increasing number of Special Case Reviews being brought forward for scrutiny, ensuring that complex and sensitive incidents continue to receive the depth of examination they require.*

*The impact of the Panel's work is also reflected in the outcomes seen this quarter. Seven Good Work letters were issued to individual officers, recognising examples of effective and proportionate practice, with some positive feedback received in response. In addition, three cases were identified for a structured feedback process involving nine officers, supporting more detailed reflection and development. Alongside this, seven areas of organisational learning were highlighted and shared with the Constabulary. These included the need for greater clarity in the delivery of GOWISELY, improvements in the timely activation and clarity of body worn video, strengthening the use of de-escalation techniques, addressing concerns relating to adultification, ensuring clarity in how officers ask individuals to define their ethnicity, and reinforcing the importance of compliant handcuffing practices and explaining detained persons the need for applying handcuffs.*

*Together, these outcomes demonstrate the Panel's continued commitment not only to identifying areas for improvement, but also to recognising good practice and contributing to meaningful organisational learning. As the Panel becomes more established within this strengthened framework, our focus remains on ensuring that independent scrutiny provides clear, evidence-based feedback that supports accountability, transparency, and positive change in the use of police powers across Avon and Somerset.*

## Special Case Reviews (SCRs)

### What is a SCR?

A Special Case Review (SCR) involves cases referred to ISoPP for additional independent scrutiny beyond routine sampling. These cases are selected due to public interest, complexity, or learning value, not because wrongdoing is assumed.

SCRs typically include incidents involving serious use of force, complex or contentious use of powers, injury or vulnerability, protected characteristics, or significant public or media interest. They may also arise from complaints, feedback, or emerging organisational learning needs.

SCRs allow deeper examination of:

- Context and decision-making
- Lawfulness, necessity, and proportionality
- Compliance with policy and legal frameworks
- The officer perspective at the time
- Learning and improvement opportunities

ISoPP's role is not disciplinary. It provides independent challenge, assurance, and insight to support transparency and public confidence.

Findings from SCR's may inform improvements in training, policy, practice, and community engagement.

### How are SCR's identified?

Cases may be referred to ISoPP through internal police processes, professional standards oversight, use of force monitoring, or community and media interest. Cases are selected where there is potential for public reassurance, scrutiny, or organisational learning.

Once identified, suitable cases are referred to ISoPP with supporting information to enable informed review. The number of SCR's is expected to increase as this process develops.

### ○ SCR1 Background:

Officers were called to an address in Easton (Nov 25) by court bailiffs due to members of the public and female party obstructing them from repossessing her car.

Officers confirmed bailiff paperwork was in order and remained to prevent breach of the peace. As bailiffs have tried to repossess the vehicle, the family of the female have placed themselves inside, obstructing bailiffs and police.

Another involved female has also obstructed the police and became physically resistant. Female has also placed herself under the bailiff's recovery vehicle. During the escalation an assault on an officer has occurred. Due to the escalation, bailiffs and police stood down. Female involved reported to have sustained fractured ribs as a result of interaction with police.

Outcome: No injuries to the female have been provided, no public complaint has been made and female dealt with via a conditional caution – which was later dealt with by an Out of Court Disposal.

○ **Panel Feedback:**

<u>Case Ref:</u>	<u>Total Responses</u>	<u>Green</u>	<u>Green2</u>	<u>Amber</u>	<u>Amber2</u>	<u>Red</u>	<u>Red2</u>
SCR1 - UoF	11	1	1	4	4	1	0

The case received one red grading from those that viewed the case, with predominantly Amber gradings (picking out areas of improvement and issues/concerns with handling).

○ **Key comments/observations made by the Panel:**

Panel feedback indicated that while officers were operating within lawful powers and some demonstrated professionalism and restraint, the overall handling of the incident was undermined by ineffective communication, limited de-escalation, and a perceived lack of neutrality. A significant missed opportunity was the failure to clearly communicate that the bailiffs had withdrawn, which directly contributed to avoidable escalation and subsequent use of force. The level of police presence and some officer demeanour, perceived as dismissive or aligned with bailiffs, further heightened tensions within an already distrustful community.

Although individual officers were praised for maintaining calm and engaging respectfully, the collective response was seen as inconsistent, resulting in a loss of control of the situation and a negative impact on public confidence.

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

*A Gold Group, comprising senior police representatives, stakeholders, and community members, was established in response to this incident due to the level of community tension it generated. Its purpose was to assess the impact on both the officers involved and the wider community, and to identify any learning.*

*The review found that alternative actions could have been taken, including officers and bailiffs withdrawing earlier to reduce the risk of a breach of the peace. The incident has since informed enhanced training, particularly in the Bristol area, with the Constabulary looking to roll out Cultural Competency and Awareness training to improve understanding of the diverse communities across Avon and Somerset.*

*Engagement with the family involved is ongoing, with positive progress reported. It is also important to note that the incident was highly volatile, and an officer was assaulted.*

*For clarity, bailiffs (enforcement agents) and police officers have distinct roles. Bailiffs operate under civil law and do not have police powers. The police do not assist with debt enforcement; their role is limited to*



*maintaining public safety and preventing breaches of the peace. Their presence does not endorse bailiff actions, and they remain neutral throughout.*

○ **SCR2 Background:**

On Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, multiple calls were made to police following an initial report of a man acting in a threatening manner and causing damage to property with a weapon (described as an axe or something similar).

Armed officers and police dog handlers attended the location. Witnesses were spoken to, leading officers to attend an address a short distance away. A man in his 60s was arrested and a second man at the address was also arrested. During the second arrest, a Taser was discharged.

Outcome: Male taken to hospital to be checked by medics. 1 male charged.

○ **Panel Feedback:**

<u>Case Ref:</u>	<u>Total Responses</u>	<u>Green</u>	<u>Green2</u>	<u>Amber</u>	<u>Amber2</u>	<u>Red</u>	<u>Red2</u>
SCR2 - UoF Taser	10	0	3	3	2	2	0

○ **Key comments/observations made by the Panel:**

Feedback on this incident reflected a more mixed assessment, with recognition of the inherent risk and the need for decisive action balanced against concerns regarding communication, coordination, and proportionality of force.

While the initial response and identification of a potential weapons threat were viewed as appropriate, the subsequent use of Taser generated significant scrutiny, particularly in relation to the absence of a clear warning and whether the level of force was necessary at that stage. Reviewers noted inconsistencies in officer approach, with some demonstrating calm and effective communication, while others used more aggressive or abrupt tactics that may have escalated the situation.

Overall, although parts of the response were considered justified in a fast-moving environment, the incident highlighted missed opportunities for de-escalation, clearer communication, and more consistent operational leadership.

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

*A Gold Group was also created for this incident due to the community impact. This was another volatile situation, and officers were unaware of what access to weapons there were. Due to this, the police response was heightened. No misconduct was found and the use of force was deemed reasonable and proportionate, although the community impact was significant.*

*Again, this incident has influenced the instigation of Cultural Competency/Awareness Training which is being rolled out to officers in the Bristol area.*

*Although officers did have physical contact with the individual, he was of a large stature and the level of control being applied did not appear sufficient to fully manage the risk, especially given the proximity to weapons. The individual was also wearing a large puffer jacket, which could potentially have concealed a weapon. At the point of decision-making, officers cannot be certain of an individual's intent or capability. The use of Taser is often considered the least impactful option available in such circumstances when compared to alternatives such as baton strikes or PAVA spray (which can incapacitate officers and other members of the public in the area), both of which may carry a greater risk of injury to both the individual and officers.*

*Ultimately, it remains the responsibility of the officer to justify and clearly document their rationale for any use of force, based on the information available to them at the time.*

## March 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 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

\*\*\*[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.

## March Case Reviews

March was the second meeting run under the new process and the viewing day itself went smoothly.

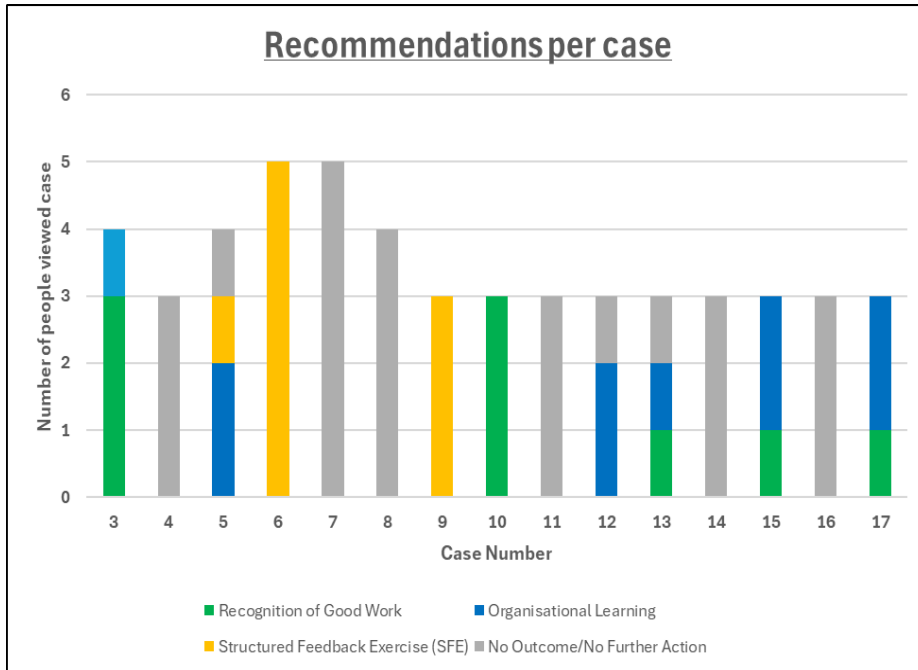
2 Special Case Reviews were done outside of this meeting and fifteen randomly selected cases covering the above listed case categories were reviewed on the day (cases 3 – 17).

As with December's meeting, 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 March meeting, held in April. None of the cases were recommended for an internal misconduct referral, and largely no further action was required across the fifteen cases.

In total, 7 recognition of good work letters were recommended to be given to individual officers, 3 cases were recommended for a structured feedback exercise (involving 9 officers) and there were 7 areas mentioned in relation to organisational learning.

Below is a snapshot of data from the cases reviewed in March. Of note, no cases were recommended for an internal misconduct referral, with many cases recommended for no further action.



### Respectfulness and Listening Ratings Analysis.

#### **Respectfulness Ratings**

Most ratings cluster at grading 4 (respectful), indicating generally positive perceptions, but there is a noticeable spread into neutral (3) and some lower ratings (2).

#### **Active Listening Scores**

Listening performance was more mixed:

- The largest group was graded as 3 (good/basic)
- A notable number graded as 2 (basic/limited listening) responses
- Very few high (graded 4) scores

Respectfulness was generally stronger than listening.

Listening was the main area for improvement, with many cases not

## Section 163/164 Vehicle Stops

### Update:

Vehicle stop submissions have declined in recent months due to ongoing development of the new \*Pronto vehicle stop form. A key enhancement is currently being built to allow officers to automatically capture their location using GPS. This will remove the need for manual entry and enable the system to accurately assign the relevant area, such as beat code or postcode. Delivery of this functionality is expected imminently.

Until this feature is in place, officers must manually identify and input their location when completing a vehicle stop record, either via the existing Formation form or the new Pronto form. This additional requirement has led to inconsistencies in recording and a reduction in submission rates across both systems.

As a result, the quality and completeness of the current data are affected. While the available data suggests a slight increase in disproportionality compared to when collection began in 2021, this should be treated with caution given the decline in submission levels and potential gaps in recording.

At present, the Roads Policing Unit and two teams in North Somerset are trialling the Pronto form without the location functionality, while other teams continue to use the Formation form.









Work to improve the system has taken longer than anticipated due to the technical requirements involved. Progress is dependent on specialist development, and while this has delayed wider rollout, completion of the GPS functionality is expected to significantly improve both data accuracy and confidence in future analysis.



Once the update is delivered, the intention is to introduce the Pronto form force-wide, retire the Formation form, and provide a more consistent and reliable basis for scrutiny of vehicle stop data.

*\*Pronto is a widely deployed mobile digital policing application, used by over 50% of UK police forces to replace traditional paper notebooks and reduce administrative time. It allows officers to securely capture, access, and share information, such as incident reports, witness statements etc., directly from handheld devices, enabling them to remain out and about rather than returning to the station.*

# 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	2026: 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. GOWISELY not always given.	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>S.163 - 164 Vehicle Stops</b>	Concerns around disproportionality with vehicle stops.	2024; Initial concern raised 2025; Presentation delivered to ISoPP by ASP about ongoing work in this area to identify disproportionality 2026; Awaiting new form to be rolled out and data to be collected	Awaiting for the technology to be able to capture location and for form to be pushed out forcewide. Expected mid-late 2026.	 Ongoing	Concern increasing
<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.opcc.gov.uk/independent-scrutiny-of-police-powers-panel)

## Get in touch

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