

COMMISSIONERS INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY REPORT STRIP SEARCH

15th May 2025

Scrutiny Panel:	Strip Search
Members:	<p>Julie O'Connor Sophie Norrington John Tooms</p> <p>In attendance: Chief Inspector Robert Peacock Michelle Ryan – SCO Holly Sproston - SCO</p>
Purpose:	<p>To ensure that Strip Search procedures have been followed by officers in respect of both adults and Under 18's, with specific focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable grounds for Stop Search – If relevant. • Strip Search Justification. • Appropriateness of the location of Strip Search – if not in a custody facility. • Gender of conducting officers. • Inspector Authorisations for the Strip Search. • Presence of an Appropriate Adult & Parent/Guardian notification prior to search if Under 18. • Presence of a safeguarding referral to the Local Authority for Under 18's • Use of BWV (Audio Recording Only) in line with force policy. • Proportionality of any applied Use of Force.
Panel Findings:	<p>During the period from 01 March 2025 to 21 April 2025 there were 213 incidents of Strip Search - 11 as a result of Stop Search and 202 undertaken in Custody. The panel selected 7 custody records to scrutinise. The panel decided to focus on Custody to ensure that the policy of audio recording strip searches in custody by arresting officers was being adhered to.</p> <p>When undertaking a Strip Search as a result of a Stop Search, officers are mandated to use their BWV camera to capture the audio only of the search. Force policy has also been introduced that audio footage is to be recorded for strip search in Custody.</p>



7 custody logs, where Strip Searches were undertaken, were provided for the panel to scrutinise. 3 custody logs were for children detained at NACF and SACF. 2 of these had audio footage available. 4 Custody logs were for adults detained at SACF; none of which had audio footage of the search.

Custody Log C25004868

The detainee was a white male, aged under 18, who had been detained at Northern Area Custody facility. The grounds for the search were clearly indicated. The correct authorisation was sought and given for the search. The custody log clearly indicated who was present for the search. The audio recording was clear and the officers were respectful, calm and friendly. It was noted that nothing was found as a result of the search. A thorough search with comprehensive information recorded in the custody log.

Custody Log C25006041

The detainee was a white male, aged under 18, who had been detained at Southern Area Custody facility. The audio recording was clear and the officer's manner was calm and respectful. The strip search was authorised by a Sergeant where the Policy clearly states that it must be at Inspector level for under 18s. The custody log lacked detail in terms of the rationale for the search; whether an Appropriate Adult was present and the names of the officers conducting the search or whether anything was found as a result of the search.

Custody Log C25005728

The detainee was a white male, aged under 18, who had been detained at Northern Area Custody facility. There was no audio recording of the search as it had been an urgent search. The search was authorised by an Inspector. The rationale, details and outcome of the search were comprehensive and well documented in the custody log.

Custody Log 25006652

The detainee was a black adult male who had been detained at Southern Area Custody facility. There was no audio recording of the search. The search was authorised by a Sergeant. The custody log lacked key details. The panel were unable to determine the rationale for the search; where the search took place; how many officers were present and who the officers were. The custody log did indicate that two packets of a white substance were found concealed in the waistband of the detainee's trousers.

Custody Log 25006204

The detainee was a white adult female who had been detained at Northern Area Custody facility. There was no audio recording of the search. The search was authorised by a Sergeant. The custody log lacked key details. The panel were unable to determine the rationale for the search; where the search took place; how many officers were present; who the officers were and what the outcome was



**Observations and
Recommendations:**

Observations:

- The panel acknowledges that it is usually the arresting officers who undertake the majority of strip searches in Custody not custody officers.
- A sergeant had authorised an under 18 searches in custody log **C25006041**.
- Audio recordings were available for two of the Under 18 searches. The third under 18 searches was an urgent search and BWV cameras were not available at such short notice due to concerns for the health, welfare and safety of the detainee at the time.
- Audio recordings were not available for any of the adult searches. Force policy requires audio recordings of strip searches unless it is an urgent strip search where the health, welfare and safety of the detainee is at risk.
- The panel were concerned about the lack of detail in the custody log for some of the searches. In particular C25006041; C25006652; C25006204

Recommendations:

- All arresting Officers to be reminded that during Strip Searches, BWV cameras should be used to record the audio of the search especially when in Custody.
- That all officers present for Strip Searches in custody are clearly listed.
- To ensure detailed entries on the custody log for all strip searches, in particular for those detainees under the age of 18.
- Officers to be reminded that authorisation for strip searches for under 18s must be at Inspector level.

Force Lead Response:

I would like to thank the members of the CISP for their time and dedication. The recommendations and observations of the panel has been fed back to the officers and their supervisors in order to improve our delivery of Strip Search.

Having been present during the CISP panel I am sighted and in agreement with the findings of the panel.

The issue around BWV and OIC not saving them was picked up in our internal custody scrutiny meeting at the start of May. Following this an email has been sent to all staff reminding them of the guidance and policy for Strip search.

In addition to this I have now instructed all OJI so ensure the following is documented on the custody record when authorising a strip search in custody

As the searching officer I have reminded them of their obligation to

- Save the AUDIO only recording – THEY MUST SAVE IT! FORCE POLICY
- Face the camera to the floor – not the tiled wall as this reflects the search



- Need to make sure they record both officer present on the record (really important with trans searching)

Custody record **C25006041** has been subject to a review by myself and OJI Insp Broughton. This fallings within the process have been provided directly to the Sgt for learning.

We currently dip sample a number of records relating thematic areas within custody, (female, children, MH etc) moving forward I will look to include a number of them subject to strip search.

CI 5764 Rob Peacock