

COMMISSIONER'S INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY REPORT

Use of Force Scrutiny

Thursday 20th March 2025

Scrutiny Panel:	USE OF FORCE
Members:	<p>Gary Hamblin Caroline Strike Brian Churm</p> <p>In attendance: Michelle Ryan – SCO Holly Sproston – SCO Chief Inspector Stuart Coleman</p>
Purpose:	<p>That the Use of Force policy and procedure has been followed and that Body Worn Video reviewed are compliant with the law and are being used effectively. The panel will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether Body Worn Video policy was adhered to • Whether the Use of Force level used was necessary • Whether the Use of Force level used was proportional to the incident • Is the action/behaviour justified • Has it been explained adequately • Has it been recorded properly
Panel Findings:	<p>The time period selected for the Use of Force incidents was from 24 January 2025 to 24 February 2025. 693 UOF incidents were recorded in this period. The panel initially randomly selected 6 incidents at their pre-meeting on 11 March 2025.</p> <p>Of those 6 incidents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 had body worn video footage of the use of force incident. • 1 had body worn video footage of the incident but this was post the use of force being applied. • 1 Incident was from October 2024 and wrongly categorized in the January / February list of incidents. <p>The Incidents viewed are outlined in Appendix 1</p>

STORM logs of the incidents were provided. Panel members were reminded that the STORM log is a live record of events as they happen and indicate calls and information being provided by officers as the incident unfolds. It is not the investigation record. The STORM logs are provided to give some context to the incident leading up to the use of force being deployed and enables panel members to be cognisant of the situation in determining whether the use of force was appropriate in a potentially quickly developing situation.

The panel agreed the use of force deployed was appropriate and proportional to the situation.

The panel noted the following:

- Occurrence 21250020003 was not viewed as the BWV footage only showed the incident after the application of Use of Force. The Chief Inspector explained that where UOF is anticipated, an officer will deploy their BWV camera. In some instances, an incident will occur where there is insufficient time to deploy BWV camera due to the instant nature of the actions.
- Occurrence 21250027868 - It was noted that an officer appeared to use a foot to the neck/ shoulder area. The Chief Inspector explained that as the detainee potentially had a firearm, it was necessary to use appropriate force quickly to ensure safety of public, officers and detainee.
- Occurrence 21250012782 – The incident was handled well by the two male officers. The appearance of a female officer who referred to the detainee as being an idiot was unnecessary and the panel felt had the potential to escalate the situation.

Observations and Recommendations:

- The panel indicated that they were impressed with the calm approach of all the officers in difficult situations.
- The panel felt that officers need to be cognisant of their language when de-escalating a situation.

Force Lead Response:

Comments from Chief Inspector Stuart Coleman:

The selection of incidents for review was a good broad representation of instances where force may be used by officers. The incidents showed where officers have demonstrated high levels of patience, and decisiveness where the situation required.

I would agree with the comments which were made about the calm approach of officers in difficult circumstances. This will be fed back to the individual officers involved. Officers are encouraged to use language which is appropriate to the needs of the situation, and at times, this may appear unhelpful. In this instance the feedback will be forwarded to the officer involved for reflection to encourage them to consider the impact if their choice of words.

Appendix 1 Matrix of Use of Force Incidents.

Occurrence No.	Date	Tactic Type Used	UOF Necessary?	UOF Proportional?	Description / Comments
21250027868	24/02/2025	C.E.D: Fire arms aimed; Unarmed skills; Non-compliant handcuffing	Yes	Yes	Adult Male. Reports of firearm being brandished in a public place. Detainee being uncooperative despite clear instructions. Good clear comms between all officers and detainee.
21240140946	01/10/2024	Unarmed skills (including pressure points, strikes, restraints, and take-downs)	Yes	Yes	Female Under18. Female runaway from Children's home. Refusing to cooperate Officer demonstrated exemplary skills in communicating in a sensitive way to young female.
21250012782	26/01/2025	Ground restraint; limb restraint; non-compliant handcuffing	Yes	Yes	Adult Male. Male under the influence of drink and drugs destroying his home. Two officers demonstrated patience with a very difficult individual who had potential to harm himself and others
21250020094	08/02/2025	C.E.D drawn; compliant hand cuffing	Yes	Yes	Male Under 18. Individual had threatened his father and was refusing to answer the door r respond to officers. Reports that individual had a knife. Situation handled sensitively by officers. Situation de-escalated using appropriate language and tone and developing rapport.
21250016841		Unarmed skills (including pressure points, strikes, restraints, and take-downs); non-compliant hand cuffing.	Yes	Yes	Female Under 18. Incident involved disagreement between daughter and mother. Officer was assaulted by daughter slamming the door on the officer's hand. Detainee slipped cuffs and then became verbally aggressive. Good deescalating techniques used once detainee was cuffed securely.