



COMMISSIONER'S INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY REPORT STRIP SEARCH

15th January 2026

Scrutiny Panel:	Strip Search
Members:	Barrie Davies Julie O'Connor Sophie Norington Josh Whitehurst In attendance: Sgt Ian Fortey Lorraine Roberts - HMICFRS Michelle Ryan – SCO Holly Sproston - SCO
Purpose:	To ensure that Strip Search procedures have been followed by officers in respect of both adults and Under 18's, with specific focus on: <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 November 2025 to 15 December 2025 there were 186 incidents of Strip Search - 11 as a result of Stop Search and 175 undertaken in Custody. The panel selected eight records to scrutinise. The panel selected two as a result of stop search and six from custody.</p> <p>Of these eight strip search incidents, two were young people and six were adults; six were white and two from other ethnic groups.</p> <p>Of the six custody records selected, three were from the Northern Custody facility and three from the Southern Custody facility.</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. Of the eight incidents five had BWV audio footage. Three custody strip search incidents did not have BWV audio footage.

Stop/Strip Search Incident 21250171931

BWV Audio footage of the strip search was viewed/ listened to. The record indicates that the strip search was authorised by a Sergeant. Force policy indicates that this should be by an Inspector. The detainee was white male. The strip search of the male was undertaken by male officers at a local police station. It was not clear from the audio who was present for the search. The station was not identified. Panel members noted that an explanation of what was about to happen, who was present and commentary of what was happening would have been beneficial. However, a good rapport was established with the detainee and additional information appeared to have been captured. In terms of the search, it was a positive outcome.

Stop/ Strip Search Incident 21250174982

BWV audio footage of the strip search was viewed/ listened to. The grounds for the Stop Search on the stop search form was not clear and more detail would have been welcomed. The search was correctly authorised by an Inspector. Detainee was an Asian adult male. The detainee was male and the two searching officers were male. The strip search was conducted at an unidentified Police station. The panel noted that the blinds in the room that was used to undertake the strip search were not drawn. Officers should ensure complete privacy for strip search. The officers conducting the strip search clearly explained the process and gave a running commentary whilst maintaining a polite and professional manner. The outcome of the search was negative.

Custody Record C25019728

The detainee was an Asian male, aged fifteen who was detained at Southern Area Custody facility. BWV audio footage was available. The search was authorised by an Inspector. The audio and custody record did not clearly identify if the rationale for the search was explained to the detainee. It was not clear from the custody record who was present for the search. The custody record does indicate an Appropriate Adult was present, but the panel questioned whether they could assume the rationale had been explained or not just because the AA was present. It was agreed that this should be clearly indicated in the record and on the audio footage. The strip search revealed a concealed sim card. Officers undertaking the search were calm and clear in their commentary. During the scrutiny of this record Sgt Fortey was able to access the live record and indicated that it was on record who was present and had undertaken the strip search. It appears that the custody record that is presented to the panel is not the full record. The panel would like to know why this is.



Custody Record C25021473

The detainee was a white female, aged sixteen who was detained at Northern Area Custody facility. BWV audio footage was available. The search was authorised by an Inspector. The panel were impressed in how this strip search was handled. The custody record was detailed, and the lengthy audio footage clearly indicated the vulnerability of the young female and the patience and care of the officers in ensuring a safe environment for the detainee. All processes were adhered to and recorded. Nothing found in search. A very professional approach by officers. The panel would like their appreciation fed back to all concerned.

Custody Record C25022059

The detainee was a white male, aged nineteen who was detained at Northern Custody facility. BWV audio footage was available. One of the male officers conducting the strip search initially sounded forceful as the audio footage commenced. However, as he explained the process to the detainee his manner became calm and professional. The strip search had been correctly authorised and recorded in the custody record. Details in the custody record were clear to the rationale. Nothing was found in the search.

The following custody records were not scrutinised by the panel but checked for BWV audio footage:

- C25019627
- C25019626
- C25021053

All were found **not** to have BWV audio footage recorded.

Observations and Recommendations:

Observations:

- The arresting officer is responsible for the strip search and ensuring that Force policy in terms of audio recording is adhered to. This clearly had not happened in custody records **C25019627; C25019626; C25021053**. There were no audio recordings of these strip searches.
- A sergeant had authorised a strip search in stop search incident **21250171931**. There was no rationale as to why this had happened. Force policy indicates authorisation should be by an Inspector.
- During the strip search recording for incident **21250171931** the officers failed to clearly explain the rationale, purpose and process of the strip search or to give a running commentary or outcome of the search.
- In stop search incident **21250174982** the grounds for the stop search were not clearly indicated on the stop search form.



- In stop search incident **21250174982** the panel noted that the window blinds were not closed in the room where the search took place.
- In custody record **C25019728** it was not clear on the record or the audio footage if the rationale for the strip search had been given.
- Whilst scrutinising custody record **C25019728** it became apparent that the printed version of the custody record was not complete and details around the search had not been printed out. Sgt Fortey was able to access the live custody record to confirm details. The panel would like clarification on why the full record is not available.
- For custody record **C25021473** the panel were extremely impressed by the patience and care demonstrated by the officers to a very vulnerable child. The panel would like their appreciation of how this situation was handled fed back to the officers concerned.

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.
- To ensure complete privacy in rooms used for strip search.
- That all officers present for Strip Searches are clearly listed and identified on audio.
- That officers ensure that, whilst recording a strip search, they clearly indicate the rationale for the strip search, where the search is taking place, who is present and give a running commentary for the benefit of the audio and the detainee.
- Full custody record to be provided to the panel.
- Appreciation of the panel to be fed back to officers involved in the strip search in custody record **C25021473**.

Force Lead Response:

CI Peacock – Custody Lead

As always custody would like to thank the panel of volunteers for taking the time to review and make comment on these records.

It's disappointing that despite the numerous reminders and force wide communications around the requirement for OIC to save the audio this is still not happening in all cases. Custody Sgts have been reminded on recent CPD days to reiterate this to OIC when a search is being agreed.

In relation to **21250171931** this is a strip search of an adult which has taken place following arrest in Custody, this can be authorised by a Sgts. This is in line with APP and Policy. (outside of custody it needs to be an Insp or if a CYP in custody).



I have reviewed **21250174982** as there are a number of points raised on this one. I am happy the ground on the stop search form are sufficient to support the search, I can not say if this has been viewed along with the custody record? This has also been viewed by the force lead for stop search and they are also of the same view. However, there is some leaning around the blind being left open during the search- this has been fed back to the officers.

In relation to the records there are only limited options to print. Whilst the full record would be beneficial the full print would be 100s of printed pages. This isn't sustainable or appropriate use of public funds- moving forward it may be better for the attend Police commander to load it on his laptop along with the summary print.

I note the positive feedback which will be passed to the officer. As always, I enjoy these panels and the findings. I would like to thank Sgt Fortey for leading this one in my absence.