STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER
Police | Fire and Rescue | Crime

COMMISSIONER'S INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY REPORT
STRIP SEARCH

16th September 2025

Scrutiny Panel:	**Strip Search**
Members:	Barrie Davies Julie O'Connor Robert Taylor Helen Turner In attendance: Chief Inspector Robert Peacock 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: • 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:	During the period from 01 July 2025 to 18 August 2025 there were 184 incidents of Strip Search - 11 as a result of Stop Search and 173 undertaken in Custody. The panel selected 10 records to scrutinise. The panel selected 2 as a result of stop search and 8 from custody. Of these 10 strip search incidents, 2 were young people and 8 were adults; 7 were white and 3 from other ethnic groups. Of the 8 custody logs selected, 7 were from the Northern Custody facility and 1 was from Southern Custody facility.

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 10 incidents selected 2 did not require the search to be recorded (one was not a strip search and the other was a clothes removal for forensics of a child). Of the 8 remaining incidents 5 had BWV audio footage. 3 strip search incidents did not have BWV audio footage.

Stop/Strip Search Incident 21250118579
BWV footage of the initial stop and then the strip search were both 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 female. The strip search of the female was undertaken by female officers at a local police station, believed to be Longton Police Station. Panel members indicated that the rationale and explanation of the search seemed poorly executed by the officers and an explanation 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 negative outcome.

Stop/ Strip Search Incident 21250124140
BWV audio footage was available for the two detainees associated with this incident. One of the detainees was over 18 and the other was 17. Both were Asian males. The panel concentrated on the detainee who was 17. The strip search was correctly authorised by an Inspector and an Appropriate Adult was present standing out of view of the search. The detainee was male and searching officers were male. The strip search was conducted at Longton Police station. 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 Log C25014067
The detainee was a white male, aged 14 who was initially detained at Southern Area Custody facility and then transferred to Northern Area Custody facility. On further scrutiny the strip search undertaken was a clothes removal for forensic purposes. As such there was not a requirement for an audio recording. The panel reviewed the custody log and were satisfied that proper processes were followed and recorded in the log.

Custody Log C25013306
The detainee was a white male, aged 13 who was detained at Northern Area Custody facility. Scrutiny of the custody log indicated that a strip search was not undertaken just a routine search. It is not known why this record was filtered in the strip search category. As such there was not a requirement for an audio recording. The panel reviewed the custody log and were satisfied that proper processes were followed and recorded in the log.

STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER
Police | Fire and Rescue | Crime

	Custody Log C25013518 The detainee was an Asian male, aged 23 who was detained at Northern Custody facility. BWV audio footage was available. The male officers conducting the strip search clearly explained the process and gave a running commentary whilst maintaining a polite and professional manner. The strip search had been correctly authorised and recorded in the custody log. Details in the log were clear to the rationale. However, the outcome of the search did not appear to be recorded and only one officer had been listed as undertaking the search. The policy indicates that 2 officers must be present. However, 2 officers were heard on the audio recording. **Custody Log C25013522** The detainee was an Asian male, aged 23 who was detained at Northern Custody facility. BWV audio footage was available. The male officers conducting the strip search clearly explained the process and gave a running commentary whilst maintaining a polite and professional manner. The strip search had been correctly authorised and recorded in the custody log. However, the rationale for the search had not been clearly indicated in the log but was clear on the audio and only one officer had been listed as undertaking the search. The policy indicates that 2 officers must be present. However, 2 officers were heard on the audio recording. The outcome of the search was not recorded. The following custody logs were not scrutinised by the panel but were checked for BWV audio footage: • C25011907 • C25013944 • C25013030 All were found **not** to have BWV audio footage recorded.
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. • Therefore, 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 logs **C20511907; C25013944; C25013030.** There were no audio recordings of these strip searches. • A sergeant had authorised a strip search in stop search incident **21250118579.** 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 **21250118579** the officers failed to clearly explain the rational, purpose and process of the strip search or to give a running commentary or outcome of the search.

	• Other strip search audio recordings observed during the scrutiny were clearly explained and a running commentary given. The panel were impressed with the professional way these searches were handled. **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. • Officers to be reminded that authorisation for strip searches for under 18s must be at Inspector level.
Force Lead Response:	**Comments from Chief Inspector Robert Peacock** 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. Its worthy of noting that during the review some of the search that had been recorded were not for the purpose of search, there were example of detainees having a change of clothing/ removal- based on risk, soiled or evidential requirement - these do not meet the definition of a PACE strip search but following a recent guidance change, these are also recorded. In these instances, I would not expected to have BWV recording. (This accounts for one of the above). I have recently circulated guidance across the force and within custody around expectations and force policy. Strip Search within custody is now reviewed by a thematic lead (Inspector) which is reported into the custody and performance meetings which are held monthly by the Superintendent. As always, the learning is shared though the Custody channels and command team. Moving forward I will be looking to allocate one of the Custody Sgt to attend the meeting as they will be able to support in greater detail around the various tabs within the recorded where additional updates maybe held. This should provide a clearer overview and understanding