



## COMMISSIONERS INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY REPORT STRIP SEARCH

20<sup>th</sup> February 2025

<b>Scrutiny Panel:</b>	Strip Search
<b>Members:</b>	<p>Barrie Davies Josh Whitehurst Penny Rowlands Helen Turner Robert Taylor John Tooms</p> <p>In attendance: Chief Inspector Robert Peacock Michelle Ryan – SCO</p>
<b>Purpose:</b>	<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"><li>• Reasonable grounds for Stop Search – If relevant.</li><li>• Strip Search Justification.</li><li>• Appropriateness of the location of Strip Search – if not in a custody facility.</li><li>• Gender of conducting officers.</li><li>• Inspector Authorisations for the Strip Search.</li><li>• Presence of an Appropriate Adult &amp; Parent/Guardian notification prior to search if Under 18.</li><li>• Presence of a safeguarding referral to the Local Authority for Under 18's</li><li>• Use of BWV (Audio Recording Only) in line with force policy.</li><li>• Proportionality of any applied Use of Force.</li></ul>
<b>Panel Findings:</b>	<p>During the period from 01 December 2024 to 20 January 2025 there were 150 incidents of Strip Search - 7 as a result of Stop Search and 143 undertaken in Custody. The panel selected 7 custody records to scrutinise and 3 Stop Search incidents that resulted in a Strip Search.</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>



Of the 3 Strip Search incidents as a result of a Stop Search, audio footage was available for all.

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

**Custody Log C24022936**

The detainee was a male who was under 18. The custody log does indicate a clear rationale for the Strip Search. The authorisation is given by an Inspector. It is not clear from the custody log when the actual search took place or who the officers were and whether anything was found. Audio was clear and officers respectful and considerate in dealing with a young detainee.

**Custody Log C24023008**

The detainee was a male who was under the age of 18. The detainee was the same detainee as the previous record who had been brought in 24 hours after his last detention. All details were completed correctly on the the custody log. Strip Search was authorised by an Inspector. Panel members indicated that the officers dealt with the search in a sensitive and considerate manner with the young detainee and clearly explained the process in clear and concise language.

**Custody Log C25000375**

The detainee was a male under the age of 18. The custody log appears light on information detailing the rationale for the strip search. Strip Search was authorised by an Inspector. The audio footage was clear and officers were considerate in their communication and explanation for the search. Panel felt that there was a lack of information on reason for search in the Custody log.

**Custody Log 25000376**

The detainee was a male under the age of 18. The Custody log was complete in the information provided on the search. The audio footage was clear and the process quick and efficient

**Stop Search Incident 21240179345**

The body worn video footage of this incident was viewed/ listened to. The detainee was a male employee of a prison. The drug dog had indicated drugs present. The officers correctly recorded the Stop Search and explained the process clearly. BWV cameras were placed down and audio continued. The search was professionally conducted. Nothing was found.

**Stop Search Incident 21250005004**

The body worn video footage of this incident was viewed/ listened to. The detainee was a female visitor to a prison. The drug dog had indicated drugs present. The officer undertaking the search appeared to lack some confidence but



covered all the relevant aspects. It was noted that the search was authorised by a Sergeant and not an Inspector. There were two videos as additional intel from the prison indicated previous concerns and a strip search was then undertaken. The BWV camera was not placed faced down but facing a tiled wall which enabled a reflection of the search to be seen.

### **Stop Search Incident 21250009230**

The body worn video footage of this incident was viewed/ listened to. Stop Search was professionally carried out and complied with. A bag of powder was found in the car when the subject was initially stopped. Strip Search undertaken at station and audio was clear. Nothing was found as a result of the strip search

### **Observations and Recommendations:**

#### **Observations:**

- All of the 4 custody logs for under 18 detainees had the correct level of authorisation.
- All 4 of these strips searches in custody had accompanying BWV audio. These 4 detainees were held at NACF
- None of the 3 Strip Searches of adults in custody had accompanying BWV audio recordings. These detainees were held at SACF.
- Custody Log C24022936 did not indicate the time of the search or the officers undertaking the search.
- Custody Log C25000375 lacked detail for the rational for the strip search.
- Stop Search Incident 21250005004 - the strip search was authorised by a Sergeant and not an Inspector. Force policy indicates that authorisation should be at inspector level.
- The panel were impressed with how officers undertook the searches and the professionalism and consideration given.
- Officers should be reminded to place cameras face down to avoid any embarrassing reflections from surfaces.

#### **Recommendations:**

- That all officers present for Strip Searches in custody are clearly listed.
- To ensure detailed entries on the custody log for all detainees under the age of 18.
- Officers to be reminded that during Strip Searches BWV cameras should be faced down with the camera averted so that audio only is recorded.
- The Force to use body worn cameras for custody staff when undertaking Strip Searches **for all detainees** to record the audio.
- Officers to be reminded that authorisation of a strip search is at Inspector level.



**STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER**

Police | Fire and Rescue | Crime

**Force Lead Response:**

**Agreed, all the above comments are appropriate and valid.**

**I will email all OJI and custody staff with these finding and recommendation.**

**CI 5764 Rob Peacock**