

Stop and Search Scrutiny Report

1st April – 30th June 2015



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Unit: Local Policing Support Unit

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Introduction

This document reports on the first quarter of the financial year 2015/16, covering the period between the 1st April and 30th June 2015 and looks at three fundamental areas of scrutiny and public satisfaction relating to stop and search in Essex.

Complaints

During the period of the 1st April to 30th June 1 official complaint was made to Essex Police Professional Standards Department pertaining to stop and search encounters. This complaint was subsequently withdrawn the following day.

1 further complaint was finalised during the period, resulting in the complaint being upheld. This complaint was originally reported in December 2014. The nature of the complaint was:

- Searching officer did not explain the grounds for suspicion required to conduct the search.

Anonymous Public Survey

It is noted that participation in the anonymous public survey is low, with few, if any, additional responses being received during the reporting period.

The below tables focus on the survey responses relating to the legal requirements of stop and search and officer civility:

PAGE: STOP AND SEARCH SURVEY

1. When you were stopped and searched did the officer:

| | Yes | No | Rating Count |
|--|--------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Explain why you were being searched? | 62.0% (44) | 38.0% (27) | 71 |
| Tell you what item you were being searched for? | 43.7% (31) | 56.3% (40) | 71 |
| Give you their name? | 35.2% (25) | 64.8% (46) | 71 |
| Explain which law you were being searched under? | 46.5% (33) | 53.5% (38) | 71 |
| Offer you a copy of the stop and search form or receipt? | 57.7% (41) | 42.3% (30) | 71 |
| | answered question | | 71 |
| | skipped question | | 0 |

| 3. Did the officer treat you with respect? | | | |
|--|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| | | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes |  | 38.0% | 27 |
| To some extent |  | 23.9% | 17 |
| No |  | 36.6% | 26 |
| Don't know/can't remember |  | 1.4% | 1 |
| answered question | | | 71 |
| skipped question | | | 0 |

| 4. Was it the right decision to stop and search you? | | | |
|--|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| | | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes, in the circumstances |  | 26.8% | 19 |
| Possibly |  | 16.9% | 12 |
| No it was wrong |  | 52.1% | 37 |
| Don't know/can't remember |  | 4.2% | 3 |
| answered question | | | 71 |
| skipped question | | | 0 |

Public Scrutiny Group

The public scrutiny group met in Chelmsford on Thursday 14th May with 5 persons in attendance.

The group were provided with details of stop searches which took place during April 2015 in the districts of;

- Basildon
- Colchester
- Braintree and Uttlesford

The search reference number, searching officer collar number and reason for search (reasonable grounds for suspicion) were provided to members of the group.

In total 44 records were examined, with 7 (16%) records deemed not to contain a suitable reason for conducting the search.

The following records were highlighted as good examples of sufficient grounds to justify the search taking place:

- SS/E/2630/2015
- SS/E/2769/2015
- SS/E/2537/2015

The group made the following observations:

- Questioned why record SS/E/XXXX/2015 stated the object searched for was drugs rather than stolen property as scrap metal found on the back seat of the car.
- Group questioned why on occasions when more than one person is present, when a single person volunteers prohibited articles the rest of the group are not searched.
- More detail required for some grounds for suspicion.
- Good examples highlighted show that succinct detail is required to provide good 'reasonable grounds for suspicion'.

Body worn video records were also looked at during the meeting with group members reviewing the following stop and search footage:

- BCL140500100496 14/04/2015 03:23:16
- BCL140500100496 30/03/2015 13:30:14

The group made the following observations from the footage:

- Both searches were conducted well in a professional manner. No issues were highlighted with either footage.

Conclusion

Further work is to be conducted to gather feedback from members of the public who have been searched to determine the effectiveness of Essex Police officers in maintaining public confidence.

The use of BWV to record stop and search should be increased as only 2 records were available for scrutiny during the 3 month period. BWV facilitates scrutiny of stop and search, provides best evidence and offers protection to officers against complaints.