

Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme

On 26 August 2014, the national Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme launched.

All 43 Police Forces signed up to the voluntary scheme. West Midlands Police was one of 24 forces who partially launched the scheme on that date, as we already met two of the four key requirements.

The full implementation of the scheme took place on 30th November 2014. Forces participating in the Scheme needed to have four key requirements in place:

1) Data Recording

Forces will record the broader range of Stop and Search outcomes e.g. arrests, cautions, penalty notices for disorder and all other disposal types. Forces will also show the link, or lack of one, between the object of the search and its outcome.

2) Reducing section 60 'no-suspicion' Stop and Searches by

- Raising the level of authority to senior officer (above the rank of Chief Superintendent);
- Making sure that Section 60 Stop and Search is only used where necessary and making this clear to the public
- In anticipation of serious violence, the authorising officer must reasonably believe that an incident involving serious violence will take place rather than may take place
- Limiting the duration of initial authorities to no more than 15 hours (reduced from 24)
- Communicating to local communities where there is a Section 60 authority in advance (where practicable) and afterwards, so the public are informed of the purpose and success of the operation.

3) Lay Observation Policy

Providing the opportunity for members of the local community to accompany Police Officers on patrol using Stop and Search.

4) Stop and Search complaints 'community trigger'

A local complaint policy that requires the police to explain to local community scrutiny groups how the powers are used where there is a large volume of complaints.



West Midlands Police currently meet the four key requirements as follows;

1) **Data recording**

Before the launch of the scheme, West Midlands Police had already introduced a new electronic recording process called eSearch. The eSearch database records all positive outcomes following Stop and Search. As well as arrests, such outcomes include fixed penalty notices, community resolutions and cannabis warnings.

The database also provides accurate, up-to-date information about how, when, why and where Stop and Search Powers are used.

2) **Reducing Section 60 'no-suspicion' Stop and Searches**

West Midlands Police introduced local protocol in 2013, which saw authority levels for Section 60 'no-suspicion' Stop and Searches raised to Assistant Chief Constable level. The force was already in a good position to meet this rule of the Scheme and the only extra amendment we had to put in place, was the change in timescales for initial authorities.

Few Section 60 authorities are granted in the West Midlands, with only one such case since the introduction of the Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme.

Details of Section 60 authorities in the West Midlands are published on the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's website.

3) **Lay Observation Policy**

Lay observations are managed via Stop and Search scrutiny panels which operate on each of the 10 local policing units on a bi-monthly basis. Panel members are encouraged to go with police officers on patrol, to observe the Stop and Search process as it happens. West Midlands Police delayed making lay observations until all observers taking part had insurance. This is now in place and several lay observations have already taken place.

Body worn video footage of Stop and Search is also used to supplement the policy.

4) **Community Complaints Trigger**

The Community Complaints Trigger is also managed via Stop and Search scrutiny panels. Where appropriate, basic information about Stop and Search complaints is shared with panels across the 10 local policing units.

Receipts issued to people who have been stop and searched also contain a 'QR' code. Using this code members of the public can give feedback directly to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner about their experience.

