

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



A

**MEETING OF THE HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME
PANEL**

will be held in the

**BROXBOURNE BOROUGH COUNCIL, BOROUGH OFFICES,
BISHOPS' COLLEGE, CHURCHGATE, CHESHUNT, WALTHAM
CROSS, HERTFORDSHIRE EN8 9XQ**

On

THURSDAY, 25TH JULY, 2024 AT 6.00 PM

Agenda Part I

Item		Page
1.	AGENDA AND REPORTS This meeting is administrated by Broxbourne Borough Council. The agenda and reports pack is attached or can be viewed here .	(Pages 3 - 200)



WATFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL



MEETING OF HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Thursday 25 July 2024 – 6 pm

Broxbourne Council
Bishops' College,
Churchgate, Cheshunt
Hertfordshire EN8 9XQ

AGENDA

- 1 **WELCOME**
- 2 **APPOINTMENTS OF THE PCP CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**
- 3 **CONFIRMATION OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER**
- 4 **APOLOGIES**
- 5 **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**
- 6 **INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER, HIS APPROACH TO THE ROLE, INCLUDING THE ONLINE ACCOUNTABILITY SESSIONS WITH THE CHIEF CONSTABLE AND REDUCED INTERACTION WITH COUNTY COUNCIL**
- 7 **MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS ON 8 FEBRUARY 2024 and 16 MAY 2024** *(attached)*
- 8 **MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES**
- 9 **QUESTIONS TO THE PANEL FROM THE PUBLIC**
Questions are to be sent to pcp@broxbourne.gov.uk by 18 July 2024, seven days in advance of the meeting to allow for a quicker and more complete response. *(20 minutes are permitted)*
- 10 **QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FROM THE PUBLIC**
Questions are to be sent to pcp@broxbourne.gov.uk by 18 July 2024, seven days in advance of the meeting to allow for a quicker and more complete response. *(20 minutes are permitted)*
- 11 **POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER ANNUAL REPORT**
- 12 **INDEPENDENT STOP & SEARCH SCRUTINY PANEL ANNUAL REPORT**
- 13 **DOG WELFARE ANNUAL REPORT**
- 14 **INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VOLUNTEER ANNUAL REPORT**

- 15 **USE OF FORCE SCRUTINY PANEL ANNUAL REPORT**
- 16 **BODY WORN VIDEO SCRUTINY PANEL ANNUAL REPORT**
- 17 **AOB**
- 18 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING 21 NOVEMBER 2024 (VENUE TBC)**



MEETING OF THE HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Thursday 8th February 2024- 6:00pm

Broxbourne Borough Council
Bishop's College
Churchgate, Cheshunt
Hertfordshire, EN8 9XQ

MINUTES

(Please note the minutes are a brief summary of the discussion and not intended to be verbatim)

Members Present:	Cllr A Curtis	Broxbourne Borough Council
	Cllr A Wren	St Albans City and District Council
	Cllr A Scarth	Three Rivers District Council
	Cllr C Gray	Hertsmere Borough Council
	Cllr A Willoughby	North Hertfordshire District Council
	Cllr A Dychton	Watford Borough Council
	Cllr A Mitchell	Hertfordshire County Council
	Dr M Ramsay	Independent Member (Vice Chair)
	Cllr L Chesterman	Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
	Cllr J Hollywell	Stevenage Borough Council
	Cllr R Townsend	East Herts District Council

Also Present:	Mr David Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner
	Mr Chris Brace, Chief Executive, PCC
	Dr Amie Birkhamshaw, Assistant Chief Executive, PCC
	Mrs N Boateng, Clerk to the Police and Crime Panel
	Mr Ibrahim Balta, Deputy Clerk to the Police and Crime Panel
	Mr Elliot Free, Legal Apprentice, Broxbourne Council

1. WELCOME

The Clerk welcomed everyone to the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel meeting. The Clerk invited nominations for the position of Chair of the Panel.

2. APOLOGIES

Cllr Lara Pringle, Cllr Taylor (Cllr Wren attended as her substitute)

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF 23RD NOVEMBER 2023

Approved.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

None.

5. QUESTIONS TO THE PANEL FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

6. QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FROM THE PUBLIC

Questions and the responses are attached.

Follow up questions and comments from Panel Members and responses from David Lloyd:

Cllr L Chesterman - happy with the response. But mentioned domestic abuse against men and questions how it would be made safe for those who don't report.

David Lloyd - commented on types of domestic abuse and their awareness. It doesn't matter what your gender or sexuality is when you report you get the same treatment. It's important to note that we are open to all reports.

Cllr Willoughby – referred to the issue of underreporting of crimes. Commenting we need to work together on this issue.

David Lloyd - I would like to work closely. It is difficult to say what is underreporting. We are in a better place than in the past. Surveys have shown interesting results about how people feel and where they feel safe. For example, people feel unsafe in the dark that is not necessarily because there is threat.

Cllr A Curtis - further questions on underreporting and what work is done to assess barriers to reporting.

David Lloyd – this is a bigger piece which we are not going to be able to answer today.

Cllr A Scarth - good work being done, Aylesbury Crown Court, domestic abuse Courts. Watford when girls go out, Night Angels and volunteers.

David Lloyd - acknowledge volunteer structure is brilliant, maybe to be also carried out/introduced to St Albans.

Cllr A Dychton – Invited all to participate in the charity walk on 25th February, walking to St Albans to raise awareness and raise funding for Watford Women Centre.

7. (i) THE PROPOSED POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S PRECEPT 2024/25

David Lloyd introduced the Precept.

(ii) REPORT ON POLICE PRECEPT CONSULTATION 2024/25

David Lloyd introduced the Precept consultation.

Dr Ramsay - pair of issues of concerns (1) proposed new HQ, (2) neighbourhood policing.

Cllr A Wren - interested in visibility of Police and neighbourhood policing. But not actual increasing in numbers.

Cllr Scarth - also criticised the lack of increase in numbers.

David Lloyd - provided background information on PSCOs history, the funding and employment law issues around PCC who kept PSCOs. However, we have managed to keep the level they are on now.

Cllr Gray - raised questions about funding arrangements from his district.

David Lloyd - provided clarity regarding level of funding from Cllr Gray's district.

Cllr A Curtis – referred to page 33 of the Precept that £58m is having to be put over the next 3 years. It doesn't seem to have moved forward; the Precept states it will be done by 2027.

David Lloyd - The project started 3 years ago; it will cost significantly more if it stops. The building we have now is not fit for purpose. It wouldn't be good enough not to go ahead it will cause a further delay of approximately 18 months. The costs have gone up significantly. Prices have inflated due to Covid and inflation.

Cllr Willoughby - I am in support. I trained in the HQ. We are putting a lot on HQ development what are we doing with local Police Stations, what is going to happen in those terms.

David Lloyd - the response should be from the new candidate who will be replacing me.

Cllr A Scarth - for the HQ were you able to get funding for energy efficiency grants.

David Lloyd and Ian, confirmed that they have tried but they couldn't.

Cllr Chesterman - requested numbers, population and planning.

David Lloyd and Ian provided numbers per capita.

Cllr Wren - criticised reduced community grants. Can we be reassured that you are looking at this and the budget has a team on it. Are you cutting budget i.e camera budget.

David Lloyd- £750k had to be trimmed accordingly, I don't want to fetter the budget for an incoming PCC.

Dr Ramsay – Invited the Panel to vote on the precept Budget.

Members of the Panel voted unanimously to accept/agree the precept budget.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING TBC



WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL



WELWYN
HATFIELD
BOROUGH COUNCIL



BOROUGH OF
BROXBOURNE
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MEETING OF HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Thursday 16 May 2024 – 6 pm

Broxbourne Council
Bishops' College,
Churchgate, Cheshunt
Hertfordshire EN8 9XQ

MINUTES

Members Present: Cllr A Curtis Broxbourne Borough Council
Cllr A Scarth Three Rivers District Council
Dr M Ramsay Independent Member (Vice Chair)

1 WELCOME BY CHAIR

2 APOLOGIES

Cllrs Chesterman, Dychton, Gray, Hollywell, Mitchell, Pringle, Townsend Willoughby

3 INTRODUCTION TO NEW POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

4 CONFIRMATION HEARING (Letter attached – appendix 1)

PCC presentation requesting confirmation of the existing deputy PCC.

Following questioning and discussion by the Panel the Lewis Cocking was confirmed in the role of deputy PCC.

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Nathalie Boateng,
The Clerk to Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel
By email only.

9 May 2024

Dear Nathalie,

PROPOSED APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

I wish to notify you of my intention to appoint a Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner in accordance with Section 18 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 so that the process required by Schedule 1 can be started.

I propose to appoint the previous Deputy PCC, Lewis Cocking. Lewis is, of course, well known to the panel having been Deputy PCC since June 2021.

As a newly elected PCC, I believe that Lewis' appointment will assist me greatly with the transition and providing useful continuity where necessary. His appointment will also ensure we continue to work well together with local government across the county as well as other partners.

I will keep Lewis' remuneration as my predecessor did, paying a pensionable salary of £52,267. This reflects my predecessor's proposal that the salary should be 2/3 that of the PCC.

Lewis will be expected to adhere to the high standards of conduct in public life as I do and as he does in his other elected roles. I look forward to presenting this proposal to the panel on 16th May and taking the opportunity to meet the members of the panel for the first time.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Ash-Edwards
Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

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ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24



**Police & Crime
Commissioner
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE**

**Jonathan Ash-Edwards
POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR HERTFORDSHIRE**

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1

FOREWORD

By Jonathan Ash-Edwards

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2023-24. This document is intended to provide a summary of the key work undertaken by the former Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and his office during the final year of 2021-2024 term.

I was elected as the new PCC on 4 May 2024 and formally took office on 9 May 2024.

This report covers the last year of David Lloyd's service as the PCC for Hertfordshire. I am grateful for all he has done over the last 12 years to keep our communities safe.

This report reviews the progress made between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 as against the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan.

Looking forward, work is now underway to develop and launch my new Police and Crime Plan before the end of my first year in office. I am confident that the priorities in that Plan will make Hertfordshire an even safer place to live and work in.

I would like to take this opportunity to place on record my thanks to the officers, staff and volunteers of Hertfordshire Police and the Hertfordshire OPCC for their work during this past year. I look forward to working with you and all our partners.

2

A YEAR IN FOCUS:

PROGRESS MADE AGAINST THE COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLAN PRIORITIES

2a

A YEAR IN FOCUS:

Prevention First and Criminal Justice

- Fewer crimes as Prevention First embedded
- Number of officers continues to exceed previous record
- Extra resources to tackle fraud and cybercrime as £4m recovered for victims

Embedding of Prevention First strategy and hotspot policing to reduce number of victims (Priorities 1, 5 & 6)

In 2020, together with the Chief Constable, the PCC and his office developed 'Prevention First', a transformative approach to crime prevention. In subsequent years this had been embedded into all areas of policing and community safety. The aim is to go beyond a focus on crime volume and harm, to an approach that sits across all organisational and operational areas of the business to prevent duplication, waste and inefficiency. By fundamentally understanding why organisational and operational issues occur, and by applying evidence-based policing, we've achieved a reduction in incoming demand, and an improving picture in productivity, and public confidence.

3

Hertfordshire already had the lowest level of crime in our Most Similar Force group, and since the introduction of Prevention First the gap has widened. It is estimated that the initiative has resulted in 104,000 fewer crimes.

PLAN on a PAGE



Our VISION is to...			Our MISSION	Our VALUES
 PREVENT HARM	 PREVENT CRIME	 PREVENT OFFENDING	We will transform policing by putting prevention at the heart of everything we do and hold ourselves to the highest professional standards.	We are honest, trustworthy and fair. We use the Code of Ethics to guide our decision making.

Our foundations for success		The STRATEGIC PRIORITIES to deliver our Vision and Mission			
 WORK TOGETHER	 BE LEGITIMATE	 PEOPLE	 COLLABORATION	 DELIVERY	 ENABLERS

Record number of officers (Priority 2)

A record high number of officers are now serving the people of Hertfordshire after continued investment from local residents and the government.

In April 2023 Hertfordshire Constabulary announced that the uplift programme had resulted in an extra 338 officers. By 31

March 2024 this had increased by another 50, resulting in 2,461 total police officers serving the county.

These new officers have boosted the Constabulary's representation, with higher proportions of women and people from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds joining. This work is continuing to ensure the police truly reflect the communities they serve and has focused on Positive Action, mentoring and retention of officers.

Of those recruited during the Police Uplift Programme in the county out of the total of 719 new officers recruited 313, or 43.5 per cent, were women. While 61 student officers, or 8.48 per cent, were from ethnic minority backgrounds.



Text a defendant scheme wins national award (Priority 13)

A project which sends a text message to defendants to remind them about upcoming court dates won a national award.

The pilot scheme was started by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Hertfordshire several years ago to save police and courts time and money. Around a fifth of first appearance court cases were delayed as the accused failed to show up in court.

The project changed the system so a reminder text message was sent to the defendant the day before the court case, which led to a significant improvement in attendance. Earlier this year the scheme won the Effective Court Hearings award at the National Police Chiefs Council conference.



Fairness in the Criminal Justice System project (Priority 104)

During the year the Hertfordshire OPCC awarded £200,000 to launch the Fairness in the Criminal Justice System project.

Commissioned by the Hertfordshire Criminal Justice Board, this research is currently investigating disproportionality across the system and identifying areas for improvement. The project is supported by a dedicated researcher with oversight from an Independent Chair.



Keeping residential burglary rates low (Priorities 72 & 73)

In 2012 there were an average of eight residential burglaries a day across the county, this has now reduced to even fewer.

Despite these low levels, burglary remains a top priority for Hertfordshire's residents and one which rightly requires a continued focus.

During the year the Strategic Crime and Insight Analyst team at the OPCC made extensive use of geographical information and associated technology to support the implementation of a hotspot policing model. This included identifying areas suitable for hotspot policing to prevent and reduce crime, such as burglary.

The improved use of research-based hotspot methodology helped secure Home Office grant funding for the county from the Safer Streets programme.



Tackling fraud and cybercrime (Priorities 66, & 86)

There has been further investment in preventing fraud and cybercrime across the county.

The OPCC agreed 12 months funding for three additional fraud investigators to enable Hertfordshire Constabulary's Serious Cybercrime and Fraud Unit (SCFU) to adopt a greater number of investigations.

The Beacon Fraud Hub continued to deliver for the public attracting national publicity for its work helping those deal with the consequences of being scammed and stopping them becoming repeat victims. It has now recovered over £4m for victims.

Awards of £5,000 and £4,744 were given from the Commissioner's Action Fund to Citizens Advice East Herts and Citizens Advice Broxbourne respectively. They used the money to offer scam advice and prevention programmes to help stop hundreds of their clients losing money to fraudsters.

In addition, many free cybercrime advice sessions were held at libraries across Hertfordshire. Officers from the SCFU and Beacon gave practical crime prevention advice to help avoid common scams and recognise new ones.

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) (Priority 47)



In the autumn £1.27m of Safer Street funding was secured by the OPCC to tackle crime and make the county safer, with an emphasis on women and girls.

Building on previous rounds of funding from the scheme, the latest award marked a total of £2.6m of additional investment in Hertfordshire.

Last year's award provided £781,274 from the Home Office plus £492,952 in matched funding contributions from local partners. The spending is being focused in three areas.

In the Bedwell area of Stevenage measures have been introduced to reduce the incidents of anti-social behaviour, vagrancy, drug dealing and violence. They include upgrading CCTV and door security systems in three tower blocks as well as employing neighbourhood wardens for nighttime patrols.

In Hertford town centre concerns over crimes associated with the weekend nighttime economy such as drug use, violence and those against women and girls are being addressed. The funding is providing new mobile CCTV cameras, brighter street lighting, police patrols and ANPR monitoring of cars using the Gascoyne Way car park. Extra training will be given to door staff, taxi marshals and CCTV operators to help women making their way home.

A final investment is focused on South Hatfield to reduce reports of vehicle crime, county line drug dealing, criminal damage and associated anti-social behaviour. The theft of motorbikes, which are then ridden dangerously around the area is a particular concern and measures will be introduced to stop this behaviour.

Other action taken through the year to prevent VAWG included the OPCC providing funding for free female personal safety classes, delivered by UK Puma Defence.

The Walk With A Cop scheme launched at the end of 2023 with events held in Rickmansworth, Oxhey and Abbots Langley. The public – particularly women and girls – and professional

partners joined police to walk areas to highlight where they feel vulnerable.



Last year police in Watford piloted a national safety initiative that targets perpetrators of sexual predatory behaviour in the town's night-time economy. Project Vigilant aims to identify and intercept those displaying concerning behaviour and prevent sexual offences from occurring.

Specially trained plain-clothed and uniformed police officers patrol public areas outside nightclubs and pubs looking out for those acting suspiciously.



Tackling the root causes of Domestic Abuse perpetration (Priorities 35 & 36)

In 2023 the new Chrysalis Centre was created as an innovative and pioneering solution to tackling individual behaviours that cause abuse within relationships. It followed a successful bid to the Home Office Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Prevention fund to get £3.2m enterprise set up.

In the first year the Chrysalis Centre received over 360 referrals across a range of authorities and partners. Self-referrals by perpetrators have also been encouraging and validates the approach for a service that sits outside specific criminal justice sanctions and is non-judgemental in its approach.

The Home Office have now confirmed the allocation of funding in year two.



Increasing the availability of IDVA and ISVAs

The OPCC secured additional government funding to support more victims of sexual and domestic abuse. With 24 specialist advisors Hertfordshire now has its highest ever number of Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs).

Some are based in hospitals, and all support victims from initial report, through investigation and to court. In February 2024, Ministry of Justice Victims Minister Laura Farris visited the service and commended the exceptional work being delivered by the team.

Enhanced support for Victims of Stalking (Priority 39)

National research found that stalking behaviours were present in 94 per cent of cases of criminal homicide and that surveillance activity which included covert watching was recorded in 63 per cent.

The OPCC continues to fund an enhanced countywide Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworker (ISAC) support provision for victims of stalking delivered by Safer Places. The service receives on average 36 referrals per month and provides advice and independent safety planning for all those request help.

Preventing serious violence in young people (Priority 79)

The Commissioner awarded over £200,000 in grant funding towards numerous projects to tackle youth serious violence. This included No More Youth and Herts Youth Justice which provides intensive one-to-one support to young people at risk of gang involvement, serious violence and exploitation.

Eight awards were also made for County-wide delivery of education and prevention awareness in primary and secondary schools and colleges. Over 10,000 young people benefited from the projects involving more than 30 places of education.

Watford based West Herts Amateur Boxing Club & Educational Support will use money from the OPCC for their Knives Down

Gloves Up scheme which uses boxing as a constructive alternative to gang affiliation, knife crime and extremism.



Hate Crime Awareness Week

More than 90 people attended a conference organised by the Hate Crime Partnership Board, which include the OPCC, in October to tackle local hate crime incidents.

The conference explored what a hate crime is, how people can report incidents and how we as a county can support victims. During the day, there was an opportunity to watch a film which looked at a hate crime case study and saw the case progress from when it was first reported all the way through to trial.

Support for victims of organised immigration crime. (Priority 88)

Following the introduction of National Policing Standards for Organised Immigration Crime, an enhanced package of victim care was jointly designed between Beacon and the Constabulary.

The Beacon Safeguarding Hub works closely with the Hertfordshire Modern Day Slavery Partnership and National Referral Mechanism.

Beacon also has access to a specialist trafficking and exploitation ISVA, provided through the OPCC's commissioned ISVA service, who supported 24 victims of trafficking and exploitation.

2b

A YEAR IN FOCUS:

Fairness, Equality and Confidence in Policing

New Legitimacy Plan to enhance public confidence

A new [Legitimacy Plan](#) to enhance public confidence and increase scrutiny around police behaviour was published by the OPCC.

The Legitimacy Plan built on the themes set out in the Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan to detail how the PCC was working with the Chief Constable to improve and

embed further a culture of transparency, accountability and ethical behaviour within the Constabulary.

Enhanced complaint handling and scrutiny (Priorities 90 & 91)

PCCs have a pivotal role in deciding how the police complaints system operates at an individual force level. Hertfordshire used the complaint handling model introduced by The Policing and Crime Act 2017. Hertfordshire's OPCC Complaint Resolution Team (CRT) continues to offer excellent customer service to the public.

Their focus is not only to have greater oversight of complaints, but to understand the issues affecting the public and the Constabulary.

CRT analyse the complaint themes and trends arising and share the data with the Constabulary. The data and information gathered enhances the PCCs ability to hold the Chief Constable to account. CRT have a bespoke database that can collate extensive information providing opportunities to grasp key elements of a person's dissatisfaction, understanding where failings have occurred and identifying individual and organisational learning.

Statistics from the year showed that CRT service recovered 73 per cent of all complaints received (998 out of 1,372) with an average time to close of five days.



In March 2024, CRT was awarded a Customer Service Excellence Award for their complaint handling. Awarded by the Centre for Public Excellence, who independently validate organisations' performance against the Customer Service Excellence standard, it assessed staff against a framework of 57 standards.

CRT also contributed to developing a Complaint Handling Toolkit by working with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. The Hertfordshire CRT is proactive in identifying and sharing learnings locally and nationally and have also shared how organisational learning can be used to effect changes.

Complaint reviews conducted by OPCC

The OPCC is responsible for conducting independent complaint reviews in place of the Constabulary. The system is designed to achieve a more efficient and proportionate process and enhance local accountability through changes to the role of the Commissioner to provide greater reassurance to the public by increasing independence and transparency.

During the year, 54 complaint reviews were conducted with eight oversight issues highlighted to the Constabulary. The feedback and insight gained within the OPCC by completing these reviews also contributes to the Commissioner's holding to account function.

FAIRNESS

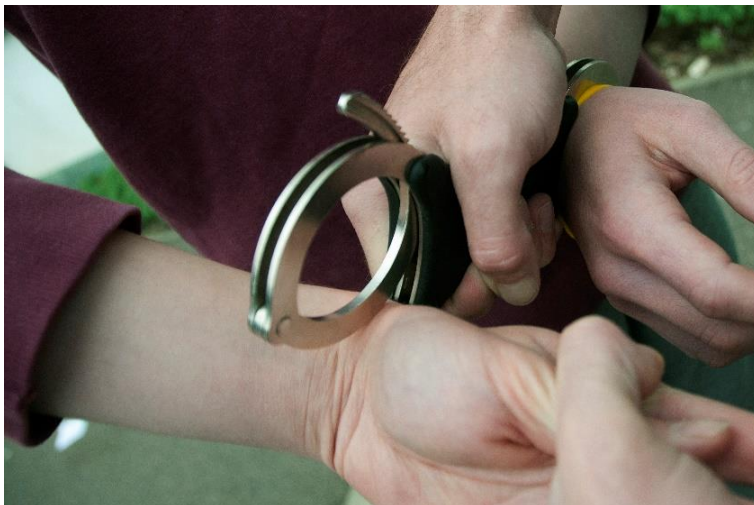
Monitor improvements in officer Use of Force records to gather accurate picture of all force deployed (Priority 101)

The OPCC's Independent Use of Force Scrutiny Panel continued to go from strength to strength. It supported the PCC to scrutinise the application of force by the Constabulary.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has described Hertfordshire as "an example of innovative practice of a partnership approach to the independent community scrutiny of stop and search."

In alignment with the Children's Commissioner for England's report, all strip searches of children in Hertfordshire are now reviewed through the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel.

These foundations continue to be built on through ongoing implementation of the recommendations made by the PCC-commissioned independent health check of the panels.



EQUALITY

Insights from stop and search disproportionality report (Priority 103)

A [research project to explore disproportionality of police use of stop and search powers](#) was published in March 2024.

The OPCC commissioned research from the University of Hertfordshire to find a better way to understand and measure disproportionality in order to analyse whether discriminatory behaviour is taking place.

The research found although there was some disproportionality around the stopping of young black men, the levels of disparity were the lowest when compared to Hertfordshire Constabulary's most similar forces.

Researchers concluded that the majority of perceived disproportionality was explained by the geographical location of where the stop and search took place. Those areas with higher crime rates and a corresponding higher police presence match with those areas with a lower social economic profile. In Hertfordshire those areas also tend to have more ethnically diverse populations.

Monitoring of the Equality Duty and delivery of Constabulary's Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) Strategy (Priority 98)

In October 2023 the OPCC identified a series of actions to develop our on-going responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty – these actions emerged from a self-assessment based on the framework published by the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC).

The OPCC is supporting the progression of activity and adjustments have been made to the OPCC's internal

working practices, alongside the significant investment in the Legitimacy Strategy which is a key strand in improving diverse representation.

Monitoring whether Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic officers were being treated disproportionately in misconduct allegations, dismissals and voluntary exits (Priority 108)

The Professional Standards Department (PSD) governance board changed its terms of reference during the year and became the strategic scrutiny board.

OPCC representatives continue to attend and its work includes monitoring discrimination and disproportionality in complaints, as well as conduct and investigations and outcomes. It provides a wide ranging and helpful tool for holding to account on this aspect of work.

Vetting is also included in this monitoring work. The monitoring work leads to further work to investigate reasons for disproportionality if required. Hot spots are reported to the forces for further action. PSD routinely collect data and report it into the PSD Governance Board for oversight of this issue.

CONFIDENCE

Set up an independent Use of Police Powers external scrutiny panel to view samples of BWV (Priority 102)

Following a successful pilot, the OPCC's Body Worn Video (BWV) Scrutiny Panel was made permanent in October 2023.

BWV has become an integral tool for modern policing, providing critical evidence, promoting officer safety, and improving trust between the police and the community.

The Panel expands the OPCC's range of external scrutiny by examining BWV encounters to shine a light on officer conduct, attitude, and level of compliance.



Hertfordshire wins national award for custody visiting

The Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner's Office (OPCC) has been recognised nationally for the high quality of its independent custody visiting scheme.

Trained volunteers from the community (Independent Custody Visitors or ICVs) make regular unannounced visits to police custody suites to check on the rights, entitlements, wellbeing and dignity of the detainees.

The Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) presented the Hertfordshire scheme with a Silver quality assurance award in November at a ceremony in Birmingham.

Increasing the use of Domestic Violence Protection Orders and Notices (Priority 38 & 40)

Following the PCC raising concerns regarding the low level of Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Orders (DVPOs), work has taken place to significantly increase their use. In 2022/23 just 27 DVPOs were applied for, amongst the lowest in the country. In 2023/24, 197 DVPOs were secured to better protect victims of domestic abuse.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

Improving non-emergency contact with police

The OPCC ran a survey in September 2023 to ask residents how they contact the police in non-emergency situations and what changes they would like to see and why.

They were also asked how they rated their contact with the Constabulary in terms of visibility and accessibility.

Among the current channels of contact are: the Herts Police website, webchat or police social media platforms, calling 101, emailing the police Safer Neighbourhood Team, or making an appointment to see an officer or PCSO at your home or at a police station.

Respondents were asked whether the method of contact they used was their preferred method and to rate their experience.

Results from the survey showed that the majority of the public showed a strong preference for a local police station front counter service. Further work is now underway with the Constabulary to explore future options.

Strategic Policing Requirements

The Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) sets out those threats which, in the Home Secretary's view, are the biggest threat to public safety and must be given due regard by PCCs when issuing or varying Police and Crime Plans.

It supports PCCs as well as Chief Constables to plan, prepare and respond to these threats by clearly linking the local response to the national, highlighting the capabilities and partnerships that policing needs to ensure it can fulfil its national responsibilities.

A revised version of the SPR was published in February 2023 which provided strengthened detail around the action required from policing at the local and regional level to the critical national threats.

The 2023 SPR set out seven identified national threats. These are as follows: Serious and Organised Crime (SOC); Terrorism; Cyber; Child Sexual Abuse; Public Disorder and

Civil Emergencies. These remain from the 2015 version with the addition in 2023 of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

The PCC has given due regard to each of these seven threat areas, and these are reflected in the priorities set for the force in the Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan and themes discussed in the PCCs holding to account meetings with the Chief Constable. These are noted within this report.

2c

A YEAR IN FOCUS:

Representing Public Concerns

Positive results for Viacam pilot locations in Barley and Hertford Heath (Priority 120)

Results from the two automated DriveSafe speed camera pilot projects have shown a positive effect for residents.

The two villages Hertford Heath and Barley had chronic speeding issues and got digital speed camera systems to monitor the 30mph limits. They were funded by the OPCC's Road Safety Fund. Analysis of the sites during the year revealed the monitored over 3m vehicle speeds, resulting in 5,500 advisory letters being sent.

Additional help for victims of Anti-Social Behaviour (Priority 122)

Following a successful trial of an initial Beacon ASB Case Manager, funding was agreed for the piloting of an additional ASB Case Manager to focus on supporting victims who invoked the Community Trigger (now known as ASB Case Review).

The role of the ASB Case Review Support Manager is to advocate on behalf of a victim either wishing to request a case review, or for those currently undergoing a review.

ASB can be complex to investigate with sometimes behaviour deemed unacceptable to one party not meeting a criminal threshold for further police involvement. Therefore, as is often the case, a number of agencies can be involved in determining whether ASB meets the criteria to impose local sanctions, including breaching of tenancy agreements

The impact of the service has been very well received with some victims stating they “would have given up” without the support of the case worker.

Rural Crime

A refreshed Rural Crime Policing Strategy was published following a reorganisation of the Rural Operational Support Team (ROST) to support local policing command.

The strategy asked members of the rural community what their main concerns were. The top three issues they reported were fly tipping, poaching and hare coursing, then theft of farm machinery, plant and vehicles.

This information is now being used for the police resources to be targeted appropriately.

Fly tips cleaned up with help of OPCC funding (Priority 127)

Farmers and landowners in Hertfordshire had fly tipped rubbish cleared up for free using money from a fund operated by the OPCC.

The fund awarded £19,620 during 2023/24 to clear up tips, including five which were part of a suspected organised crime tipping operation.

Awards included match funding contributions to install target hardening measures to prevent future tips.

2d

A YEAR IN FOCUS:

Digital and Commerciality

- Building of new police Headquarters gets underway
- New Watford police station opens
- Working with businesses to reduce crime

**Building gets underway for new Constabulary Headquarters
(Priority 141)**

Construction work began on the major redevelopment of Hertfordshire Constabulary's headquarters site.

The £70m investment in new buildings at Stanborough, in Welwyn Garden City, will improve the delivery of critical operational police services for the people of Hertfordshire.

The decision was made by the PCC as demolishing the building was a cheaper option than trying to extend the life of out of date facilities which were not fit for purpose.

The development will enable the police to deliver a better service to the public while reducing the estate long-term revenue costs, as well as meeting commitments on sustainability and the decarbonisation strategy.

Essential services and departments based at the site include the Major Crime Unit, the Force Control Room, victim services, the dog unit, forensic services, the senior leadership team and operational support staff. The fixed-price project is due to be completed in 2026.



New police station in Watford brings improved response times

The new police station in Watford town centre opened in George Street after officers and staff moved from Shady Lane which had been their base since 1940.

The new building is a stone's throw from the town centre, and closer to the High Street. It was acquired after the old station site had reached the end of its economic life and was beginning to require costly maintenance.

The new building underwent a full internal and external refit to meet the demands of modern-day policing, and importantly for the public, it has retained a front counter service.

Police response times have also improved since officers moved to the new Watford station.



Preventing business crime (Priority 144)

Quarterly meetings have been held by the Independent Business Advisory Group (IBAG), set up by the OPCC to work with Hertfordshire's business community to prevent business crime and understand the issues that most affect businesses.

IBAG has a crucial dual purpose, enabling businesses to play their part in keeping Hertfordshire safe and providing the Constabulary and OPCC with a barometer across the business community around crime and community safety.

IBAG has hosted in-depth discussions and analysis over the last year on key issues that impact Hertfordshire businesses, ranging from Fraud and Cyber Crime to Retail Crime and Technology and Crime Prevention.

Investment in geographical mapping software to provide transformative spatial insights around the distribution of crime. (Priority 50)

Over the last 12 months staff at the OPCC have made extensive use of geographical information and associated technology to support the implementation of a hotspot policing model.

This includes identifying areas suitable for hotspot policing to prevent and reduce crime. The improved use of research based hotspot methodology has helped us secure Home Office grant funding from the Safer Streets programme.

Automated redaction tool saves hours of officer time preparing court files

In October 2023, Hertfordshire Constabulary went live with use of the DocDefender tool.

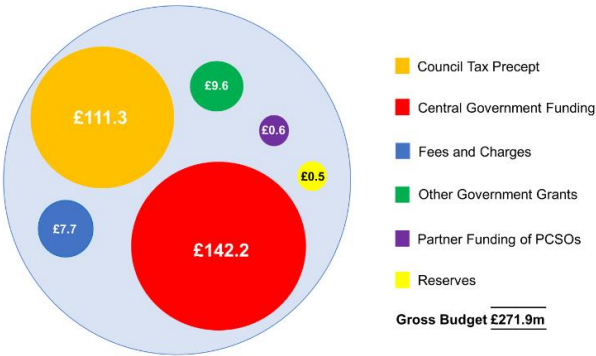
This automated redaction tool saves a substantial amount of officer hours by automatically redacting case file documents, including statements and phone records, that would otherwise require manual redaction.

The process is quicker, more accurate, and more secure than manual redaction. The Hertfordshire Criminal Justice Board Digital Innovations Subgroup is now assessing further opportunities to improve efficiency through automation.

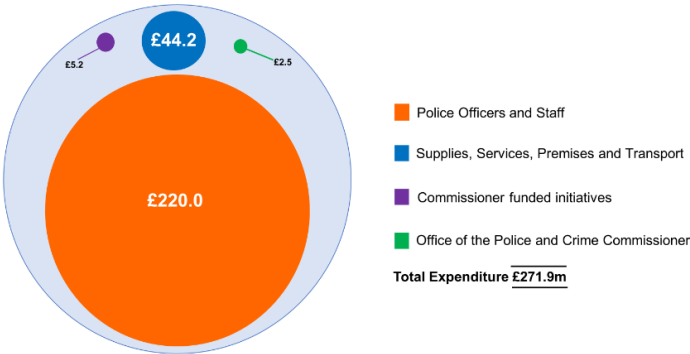
3

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL CONTEXT 2023/24

Where does the money come from?



How is the money spent?



The precept was increased by £15 (6.73 per cent), which contributed an extra £7.0m of funding which, together with efficiency savings of £7.2m, enabled £6.2m of investment.

At the end of 2023/24, there was a draft overspend of £2.9m (1.1 percent) on the net revenue budget of £253.5m. The primary contributing factors to this overspend were as follows:

- £4.7m (1.9 per cent) overspend on the police budget delegated to the Chief Constable, predominantly on police officer pay, owing to higher than budgeted police officer numbers, and police staff overtime costs due to vacancies.
- £1.8m (35.2%) underspend on the budgets which are the responsibility of the OPCC, predominantly due to an underspend in the Commissioner's grant budget and staff vacancies throughout the year.

In addition, a total of £19.8m was spent on the capital programme during the year. This included investment in estates (£13.5m), ICT (£3.2m) and Fleet (£2.5m). However, £13.0m of the resources have been carried over into 24/25 to complete schemes that were delayed in 2023/24.

General reserves were maintained at £12.6m. This was 4.6 per cent of the gross revenue budget of £271.9m.

The draft Statement of Accounts includes further details of the financial performance of 23/24 and will be available to be viewed here: [Finances \(hertscommissioner.org\)](https://hertscommissioner.org/finances)

CHIEF CONSTABLE'S REPORT



It has been a great privilege, once again, to lead Hertfordshire Constabulary over the last year. It is a police force that is full of good, committed people who do great things for the people of the county day in and day out. Whilst the national media headlines tend to focus upon the negative stories connected with policing, justifiable in many instances, what is frequently missed is all the outstanding work that goes beneath the media radar. I hear accounts of life saving, heroism, investigation excellence, protection of vulnerable victims, positive partnership working, preventative work, meaningful innovation and real care for people daily. I wish the public could see the positive difference that I observe from police officers and police staff each day more readily than the negative headlines permit. Admittedly we do not get everything right, and some officers and staff in Hertfordshire have badly let us down, but

overwhelmingly I have great pride in this organisation, its people and their commitment to deliver excellent policing services throughout Hertfordshire.

Our delivery

Prevention First remains the cornerstone of our approach to policing. I remain convinced that this is right for both the public and the organisation alike. The only thing that victims of crime have in common is that they would rather never have been a victim in the first place. One of Sir Robert Peel's nine founding principles for policing in 1829 was that the role of the police is to prevent crime, which is as true today as ever. Over the past year our focus has been on getting the Prevention First approach firmly embedded, not only in preventing crime, but also harm and offending. It is well understood across the Constabulary and we know that as well as being good for the public, prevention also works for policing as it will reduce the overall demand on our services. Key to this is our commitment to neighbourhood policing, maintaining a model of local officers being ringfenced to focus on crime and antisocial behaviour issues in their local communities. We have a higher ratio of Police Community Support Officers than most forces and have been able to commit to keep this number in the year ahead. Our Prevention First teams have been able to develop and share good practice, making us more effective at problem solving real issues in the community, for example the positive work with housing authorities to address problematic addresses. The teams have also delivered on hotspot policing, increasing patrol activity in areas subject to crime and anti-social behaviour with demonstrable reductions. This work will continue and expand in the year as the Safer Streets initiative broadens and additional funding enables these hotspot patrols to be delivered in every district within the county. We

have also commenced delivery of the Clear, Hold, Build initiative, enforcing against serious criminality in a locality and then working closely with the community and other statutory agencies to ensure that it cannot return. This year, Hertfordshire has recorded a total of 74,650 crimes, down 1.8 per cent compared to 2022/23 but 12.7 per cent lower when compared with the pre pandemic policing year of 2018/19. Hertfordshire continues to experience the lowest crime levels per head of population within our group of most similar forces and the eastern region as a whole. Criminal Justice Outcomes (CJOs) have risen by 1.5 per cent to 13.2 per cent. Violence Against Women and Girls has seen a decrease in sexual offences recorded and also an increase in CJOs. Levels of Domestic Abuse have reduced by 8 per cent and outcomes increased by 0.7 per cent. Neighbourhood Crime has seen some increases but overall remains well below pre-pandemic levels. Residential burglary for example has risen by 5.2 per cent this year. Recorded hate crime has seen an increase of 4 per cent and anti-social behaviour reports have also increased by 2.2 per cent. There has been considerable focus this year on improving our response to the public. We have invested resources into our control room leading to substantial improvements in our call answering times, both on 999 calls and 101 calls. Our performance against the standard of answering 999s within 10 seconds and 101 calls within 90 seconds is now published monthly on our website. At the same time we have seen sharp improvements in our attendance times to our most urgent incidents, now reaching over 90% of such calls within 15 minutes, and over 80% of those requiring prompt attendance within one hour. Our Echo system continues to work very effectively for us, capturing views from the public that we use to adjust our policing priorities and to provide

feedback to our officers and staff on their interactions. Tackling violence against women and girls has continued to be a major force priority as we know that women and girls are still disproportionately affected by violent and sexual offences. The Constabulary has a well resourced dedicated Domestic Abuse, Investigation and Safeguarding Unit and a similar team for Rape and Serious Sexual Offences. This is evident in the strong outcomes that we obtain for victims in such cases, which compare very favourably with other forces. In the last year we have fully embraced the Operation Soteria national guidance to further strengthen our work in tackling rape and sexual offences. Our strategic approach to these issues has as its primary focus tackling offenders, in order to protect individuals, families and communities from harm. We have delivered additional training for our officers, in their legal powers and also in the identification of vulnerability in others and how to take action accordingly. Our specialist Domestic Abuse Investigation and Safeguarding Unit have dealt with thousands of cases of domestic abuse over the last year. Their work has included greatly increasing the number of preventative orders that police apply for in support of victims, to protect them, give them some respite from their abusive relationship and space to make decisions about the future. The team has been well supported by the Specialist Safeguarding Unit and 'Beacon', our victims services team, who focus upon helping victims recover from the crimes committed against them. Our work on domestic abuse has been considerably enhanced by new services provided by the Chrysalis Centre, a ground-breaking programme of interventions to break the cycle of domestic abuse that focuses on achieving behavioural change in perpetrators. The scheme, funded through the Police and Crime Commissioner, is working with

a number of individuals across the county to positively change their problematic behaviour.

Our collaboration with Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire as well as the Eastern Region Specialist Operations Unit remains strong, and we continue to work well together to provide specialist capabilities across our respective force areas in order to reduce harm and target the most dangerous criminals who do not recognise force boundaries. The work in tackling serious and organised criminality is impressive and making Hertfordshire safer, from dismantling county lines drug dealers, tackling online abuse of children and the vulnerable, intervening in the trade in criminal firearms, and now increasingly countering the threat from cyber crime.

Our Workforce

As I write, we have more police officers serving in Hertfordshire than at any other time in our history due to our success in delivering and maintaining our police officer Uplift numbers indeed exceeding those targets over the last year. It's heartening and encouraging to see that we continue to be an employer and career of choice for many new recruits and also experienced colleagues transferring in from other forces. We have increased the recruitment of female officers by 10% over the last year as we strive to have a more representative workforce and now need to achieve similar progress for officers from ethnic minority backgrounds. Our attrition has also reduced over the last year as our efforts around retention have started to bear fruit, with our team managing to retain the majority of colleagues who are referred into them at a time when they are considering leaving.

Whilst I am encouraged by our recruitment efforts and ability to maintain Uplift, I do acknowledge the challenges that this

brings. Like many forces across the country, we have a number of inexperienced officers on our front line and we continue to meet the challenge of training and upskilling head on so that our new officers feel supported in a system that enables and encourages them to become the best officers they can be for our local communities.

Wellbeing has also scaled up at pace across the force over the last year with the number of wellbeing champions increasing nearly fivefold. Our focus has very much shifted to proactive work, especially across our high harm units. This approach will ensure we provide colleagues with the tools and mechanisms to stay well, despite the challenges and trauma that their roles can inevitably bring. Family evenings also broaden out our wellbeing offer so that we engage officer and staff families so they too can be helped to support loved ones working in the Constabulary. We have also revitalised our 'keeping in touch' days for those officers and staff out of the workforce temporarily due to maternity and other extended absence, thereby smoothing their return into policing when they are ready.

We have also invested time and energy into progressing the Police Race Action Plan and we have appointed an officer full time to focus on this. Over the last year we have engaged closely with our Race Inclusion Board members who continue to provide hugely meaningful support and challenge as we progress the plan. Action in the coming year will include increasing our engagement with underrepresented communities, trialling innovative new approaches and encouraging the Race Inclusion Board to properly hold us to account. Some of our work has been highlighted as good practice by the national Police Race Action Plan team, but there is more we need to do.

Considerable focus has been applied to rebuilding confidence

in policing within communities that has been so badly damaged by the dreadful cases nationally, and some local cases, of police officers and staff abusing their position. Every member of the workforce has been subject to further checks in the last year to ensure we know who we have working for us, with in over 99% of cases there being no issues highlighted. Of the small number of individuals that were identified this has enabled discussions to take place, closer supervision where necessary and in a handful of cases vetting clearance has been withdrawn. Our 'Call it Out' campaign for the workforce is also now firmly embedded and this has given confidence for issues to be raised about colleagues behaviour. It is a healthy sign that this reporting has increased, showing poor behaviour will not be tolerated and enabling these to be investigated. Some of these reports have led to disciplinary action being taken and individuals leaving the organisation.

Our Funding and Infrastructure

Over the last twelve months a fundamental review of the structure and financial resilience of the Constabulary has taken place. The detailed work of the dedicated team has confirmed that our current operating model remains largely effective and efficient, with a few adjustments proposed. We are now making decisions based on the recommendations from the team to ensure all our functions and operating systems within the force are as efficient and effective as they can be. The comprehensive work, delivered jointly with the OPCC, is the first review of the entire force for over a decade and will be invaluable to assist the early discussions from May 2024 with the incoming Police and Crime Commissioner. Whilst we celebrate our performance and progression over the last year, we have also had to deal with strong financial

headwinds. Inflation has been high for all of us and has had a significant impact upon Constabulary costs as well. A much needed 7% pay rise was awarded to officers and staff last September but this created a substantial pressure upon the budget. The third major impact has been the welcome increase in police officer numbers, however this came with some strict funding criteria from government that has meant maintaining these numbers above the required level to avoid significant financial penalty. These three factors, alongside central government grants not fully keeping pace with the cost increases, led to a budget overspend in 2023/24 of approximately £4m. This is not a sustainable position so a great deal of effort has gone into agreeing a balanced budget for 2024-25 with the Police and Crime Commissioner. This has involved baselining these increased costs whilst also making some savings as we seek to protect the policing services we provide to local communities.

While the coming year will be challenging, it is also exciting and brings many opportunities. Our old headquarters buildings have now been demolished and the structure for the new building will start being erected in the summer. This will modernise and transform our headquarters site over the coming months, delivering fit for the future facilities that will serve the Constabulary well for many years to come. Last Autumn we relocated to our new police station in Watford, with a formal opening ceremony in February. These facilities are a vast improvement on the old station, have been received positively by the workforce and the location has already had the impact of improving police response times to incidents in the Watford area.

Our ICT infrastructure has been improving as well, with the introduction a new digital asset management store and investigative tools to improve the collation of digital evidence

and speed the preparation of files for court. Services to the public have been enhanced with automated messaging systems to callers and victims of crime, and just recently we have gone live with our new Herts Connected website for neighbourhood engagement. Further exciting opportunities are being developed as robotic process automation and AI has become within reach and promises to revolutionise working practices. The additional investment in these areas should increase our productivity and give both the public and our workforce a better experience.

Finally I take this opportunity to wish David Lloyd all the very best as he steps away from the role of Police and Crime Commissioner after three terms in office. He is the only PCC that Hertfordshire has known to date and should rightly take much credit for what we have collectively achieved. He has both supported and challenged the Constabulary, in equal measure, to be the best it can be during his time in office. I welcome the new Police and Crime Commissioner Mr Ash-Edwards following his success in the election in May, and I look forward to developing our new working relationship over the coming weeks and months.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlie Hall". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Charlie" and the last name "Hall" clearly distinguishable.

Charlie Hall QPM M.A. (Cantab), M.Sc.

Chief Constable

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Hertfordshire Independent Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel

Annual Report 2023/24



**Police & Crime
Commissioner**
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Chair's Foreword



It is my pleasure to present this annual report to the Hertfordshire community.

As our newly elected Police and Crime Commissioner Jonathan Ash-Edwards takes office, I extend my gratitude to his predecessor, David Lloyd. Under his tenure, the Panel made significant strides in independently scrutinising stop and search practices in Hertfordshire. We look forward to building on this progress in the years ahead.

For those who live and work in the "County of Opportunity", effective policing is essential to our daily lives and wellbeing. Stop and search, when executed properly, is a powerful tool for deterring and preventing crime. It can build public trust and confidence in law enforcement.

The Hertfordshire Independent Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel has been a pioneering force since its formation a decade ago, making it one of the first of its kind in England. During this time, Panel members have scrutinised over 3,300 stop and search records from across the county. This oversight promotes accountability, effectiveness, and high professional standards within our police force. Whilst the Panel has evolved and developed over time, the core objective of the Hertfordshire Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel remains committed to independent and unfettered scrutiny, including reviewing Officers' Body Worn Video (BWV) footage.

In the coming year, I would like the Panel and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to redouble their efforts on increasing community awareness and involvement of the wider public in its vital scrutiny work. Raising public awareness is absolutely crucial for fostering broader and more diverse participation in the scrutiny process, which in turn enhances trust in the Constabulary. This trust is vital for effective community engagement and upholding the UK's policing by consent model.

Increasing public awareness of and involvement in the Panel's work will require a strategic communication plan, which the Panel will support the OPCC to develop and deliver. A clear communication strategy should include:

1. Effective use of social media
2. Encouraging support from employers offering volunteering days.
3. Combined online/in-person meetings whenever practical.
4. Greater opportunities for younger volunteer panel members.
5. Rollout of 'mock panels' to recreate the scrutiny process and as way to promote the Panels and encourage people to join.

In the past year, we have focused on implementing the OPCC's Health Check recommendations. These recommendations emphasise the need for a wider cross-section of society to participate in scrutiny, considering community, demographic, and geographical perspectives, as well as incorporating diverse lived experiences. We have made good progress, and the aim in the coming year will be to complete implementation of the recommendations. Our plans include organising meetings in more locations to increase accessibility, particularly for younger people. Growing the diversity and overall size of the panel membership from its existing 22 members will also enable the

Panel to carry out a greater volume of scrutiny - including reviewing more BWV footage which, whilst time-intensive, is essential for thorough oversight.

And I would remind all readers of this report that our meetings are open to any member of the public who wishes to attend as a guest observer. Anyone who would like to observe a meeting can contact the OPCC for further details including dates and locations.

On 12 December 2023, the Panel received the long-anticipated report from the University of Hertfordshire on stop and search disproportionality. The report included data which identified evidence of disproportionality. As a result, the Panel identified some key actions to advance its future scrutiny and improve our understanding of disproportionality:

1. Adopting a more targeted, data-influenced approach to panel scrutiny.
2. Strengthening the Panel's feedback and monitoring loops with the Constabulary.
3. Asking the Constabulary a set of questions on what action it intends to take in response, notably around the areas of possible discrimination identified in the report.

This work will be taken forward at pace so that scrutiny of disproportionality becomes a permanent element of the Panel's work.

The Panel has been instrumental in establishing a structured framework to obtain detailed and timely feedback and accountability from Hertfordshire Constabulary. This has led to direct influence on the Constabulary's standard operating procedures and improvements in officer training. The Panel has widened its scrutiny activities to include all under 18 strip searches and Section 60 authorisations, in line with best practice, and continues to influence Constabulary policy and practice. The Panel has, for example, continued to highlight the fact a proportion of stop and search records it reviews are cut and pasted, and the number of such records has now markedly decreased. This is evidence that the Panel has a real and positive impact on stop and search practice in Hertfordshire.

This was borne out in His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report on Section 60 published in December 2023, which highlighted Hertfordshire's Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel as a case study in best practice and an innovative example of a partnership approach to independent scrutiny of stop and search. The Panel will continue to develop and improve its feedback processes in the coming year, as we strive to further enhance the transparency, accountability, and effectiveness of policing in Hertfordshire.

On behalf of the Panel, I would like to thank the staff at the OPCC for their support over the past year. It is thanks to their hard work in organising our meetings that the Panel is able to conduct such effective and thorough scrutiny. I would also like to thank my fellow Panel volunteers for their continued commitment to the work of the Panel and the invaluable support they provide me in my role as Chair. A note of thanks to Vice Chair, Mohammed Islam-Ruman, who brings support and experience to me and the Panel, which is much appreciated. A special note of thanks also to Alexander Allen, the Panel's inaugural Data Champion, who led on establishing the Data Sub-Group, along with setting the Key Performance Indicators which are so important in monitoring the Constabulary's performance and measuring outcomes.

And last but by no means least, we are very grateful to the Constabulary for the outstanding level of support and transparency they continue to provide to the Panel. It is this professional and supportive relationship which enables the Panel to deliver effective and unfettered scrutiny and we look forward to continuing to build on the progress made in the year ahead.

Demitrius Nurse

Chair of the Hertfordshire Independent Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel

Police and Crime Commissioner's Foreword



External scrutiny is vital to upholding police legitimacy and public confidence in the police. As the new Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, it is clear that external scrutiny arrangements are well embedded.

I support the proportionate, lawful, justified and respectful use of stop and search as an important tool for police officers to disrupt criminality and keep Hertfordshire residents safe. It is essential that police officers feel confident in using their powers when justified, and external scrutiny plays a valuable role.

The Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel is the longest-standing Panel managed by my office and continues to go from strength to strength as it marks its tenth year in operation. I was particularly pleased to see that the Panel's work has again been recognised by HMICFRS, which highlighted in its recent Section 60 report that Hertfordshire's Stop and Search Panel is a case study in good practice and an example for other force areas to follow. This is testament to the excellent work of the Panel.

I am also encouraged by the strength and professionalism of the working relationship between the Panel and Hertfordshire Constabulary. It is clear that the Constabulary deeply value the quality of scrutiny provided by the Panel. The strength of the Panel's feedback loops with the Constabulary means that the Panel continues to have a real and positive impact on stop and search practices in Hertfordshire. This results in better policing for all those who live, work and study in our county. Everyone in Hertfordshire should be reassured by the key findings in the Panel's report, which indicate its position of confidence in records scrutinised was 74.9% (an increase on 66.1% in the previous year).

Disproportionality in stop and search rightly continues to be an important topic of debate, both nationally and in Hertfordshire, with more work to be done. My predecessor commissioned research from the University of Hertfordshire which provides useful insight and will inform the Panel's work. The Panel's decision to adopt a more data-influenced approach to its scrutiny has the potential to significantly enhance our understanding of disproportionality and I look forward to seeing the outcome of the Panel's vital work in this area.

I would like to thank the panel members for volunteering their time to the important work of the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel. I look forward to working with its members in the coming years as it continues to strengthen the valuable support it provides to me in discharging my statutory duties.

Jonathan Ash-Edwards

Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire Constabulary's Foreword



As the Senior Officer responsible for the oversight of the Use of Police Powers, I am pleased to note another positive annual report from the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel. The work of the panel provides vital independent scrutiny and oversight of the Constabulary's use of powers to stop and search citizens.

Whilst these powers are a useful tool in fighting crime and keeping people safe, their use is not without risk in terms of public confidence. Indeed, the misuse or disproportionate use of search powers can negatively impact on communities and policing legitimacy.

Whilst we have no targets in relation to stop and search, I am pleased to note that we continue to work to target its use, ensuring we see the rates of positive outcomes and arrests maintained or improved. I am particularly pleased to note that this positive direction of travel is also matched with an increase in the panel's level of confidence, for those searches they review.

Finally, it is important to note that the work of the panel does not operate in a vacuum, indeed when the panel meets, we have in attendance supervisors and operational officers whose presence allows the panel to ask questions to inform its decision-making, and allows operational officers to see the work of the panel, feed back to their peers and inform and improve operational practice.

We are lucky to have the panel in place, acting as an independent 'critical friend' representing the communities of Hertfordshire and holding the Constabulary to account. I look forward to continuing this work with the panel in the coming year.

Chief Superintendent Dean Patient

Chair of Hertfordshire Constabulary's Police Powers Board

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key findings

- This year, Hertfordshire Constabulary conducted 6,617 stop and searches - a decrease of 5% on last year. This is part of a general historical downward trend in volumes of stop and search through improved intelligence-led stops. 1,286 (19%) of searches resulted in an arrest - a 1% increase in the arrest rate on last year. This is the highest stop-to-arrest ratio at any point in the last decade.
- The positive outcome rate for the county was 35% - an increase of 4% on last year.
- Eight Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) saw improvements in positive outcome rates compared to last year. Only St Albans and North Herts observed small decreases in positive outcome rates (of 0.2% and 3% respectively).
- Welwyn Hatfield continues to have the highest positive outcome rate of all CSPs, increasing from 38% last year to 43% this year.
- 433 dip-sampled stop and search records were scrutinised by the Panel this year. This represents 6.8% of all available records, which is an improvement on last year (4.9%). It also represents a 27.7% increase in the number of records scrutinised by the Panel on last year.
- The Panel's position of confidence in records scrutinised was 74.9% (an increase on 66.1% in 2022/23 and 66% in 2021/22).¹

Key achievements

- The Panel has continued its scrutiny role through regular meetings, increasing the proportion of total stops scrutinised this year on last.
- The Panel has reviewed one Section 60 authorisation and 32 pieces of Body Worn Video (BWV) footage during the year.² It has also reviewed all under 18 strip searches, in line with the recommendation made by the Children's Commissioner for England.³
- The Panel has reviewed the research undertaken by the University of Hertfordshire on stop and search disproportionality and agreed how it will use its findings to inform and improve its scrutiny and wider understanding of this vital issue.⁴
- Panel members have taken up a multitude of training opportunities throughout the year, including refresher training, observation of officer training, and 'Ride Alongs' with the Constabulary.
- Panel members have provided invaluable support to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) in the ongoing implementation of the Health Check recommendations, an OPCC-commissioned review of the governance and operation of its scrutiny panels. In parallel, the Panel has continued to adopt the Home Office's draft National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels to ensure that it meets or exceeds national best practice wherever possible. Progress made this year provides a strong

¹ The Panel's grading system was updated and improved mid-year, from the 'Confident/Not Confident' model used in previous years to a RAG (Red-Amber-Green) grading system – please see Appendix E for more detail.

² Body Worn Video (BWV) is camera footage that refers to video captured by cameras worn by police officers and Special Constables.

³ <https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2023/03/cc-strip-search-of-children-in-england-and-wales.pdf>

⁴ The OPCC commissioned the University of Hertfordshire to produce a report on stop and search disproportionality in Hertfordshire. The report is published on the OPCC website here: <https://www.hertscommissioner.org/news/latest-news/2024/pccs-welcomes-insights-from-stop-and-search-disproportionality-report/>

foundation on which to continue enhancing the breadth and depth of the Panel's scrutiny over the course of the next year.

- In line with the Health Check recommendations, Panel meetings have been hosted at different external locations across the county, helping to build positive working relationships with partner organisations and facilitate attendance and participation in meetings by Neighbourhood Policing Teams across CSPs.
- A total of 40 Officers (3 Inspectors, 27 Sergeants and 10 Police Constables) have observed Panel meetings over the course of the year to assist their understanding of scrutiny practices and how the public observe stop and search practices, supporting officer training and development. Their feedback has been very positive, and they have contributed helpful operational advice in support of the Panel's scrutiny work.

Recommendations for the year ahead (April 2024 – March 2025)

- Building on the findings from the University of Hertfordshire's report on stop and search, ensure disproportionality becomes a routine area of scrutiny.
- Adopt a more data-influenced approach to scrutiny work, making more sophisticated use of PowerBI to understand trends and anomalies and identify issues requiring further investigation – and tracking progress over time.
- Deliver a communications strategy spanning the OPCC's scrutiny panels to increase community awareness of and involvement in the panels' work.
- Find effective ways to deliver a more diverse Panel membership by ethnicity, age and those with lived experience of police activity.
- Continue to identify public venues for meetings to maximise opportunities for members of the public to observe the Panel's work; and work to establish effective, practical hybrid meeting options to help attract and retain younger, more diverse panel members.
- Continue to increase the sample size of BWV scrutinised at meetings.
- Work with the OPCC's Complaint Resolution Team (CRT) to understand how its rich data sets can be used to inform and advance areas of Panel scrutiny.
- Continue to implement the Health Check recommendations and adopt the Home Office's draft National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels to ensure that the Panel aligns with national best practice.

Become a Member of the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel!

We continue to recruit for new Members! As a Panel Member you would:

- **Attend and participate in Panel meetings.** Meetings last for 2.5 hours and are currently held mostly in person, during the day, across the county. Our ambition is to make Panel Meetings as flexible and inclusive as possible, and we continue to develop optimum online and hybrid options.
- **Be offered training to support your scrutiny,** including the opportunity to go on a Ride Along with police officers.
- **Be paid travel expenses.** Whilst this is a voluntary role, the OPCC meets any reasonable travel expenses incurred by Panel members.

We welcome applications from anyone who lives, works or studies in Hertfordshire. The OPCC is particularly interested to hear from younger people and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

If you are interested in finding out more about becoming a Panel Member, please email Susan McNeill at the OPCC: susan.mcneill@herts-pcc.gov.uk

1. Introduction

This report summarises the work undertaken by the Hertfordshire Independent Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel (hereafter referred to as the 'Panel') between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.⁵

The Panel's assessments and feedback inform individual and organisational learning and development, and improvement in stop and search practices. This supports efforts to improve transparency and enhance public confidence in the Constabulary's ethical and lawful use of stop and search powers.

This report reflects on the work of the Panel's scrutiny function, including the random sampling and assessment of stop and search records, monthly and trend summary data, BWV, Section 60 authorisations, and under 18 strip searches.⁶ It also assesses the Panel's development over the year and outlines next steps to continue strengthening its scrutiny function over the coming year.

This report uses the most recent data available to the Constabulary on PowerBI. Since last year's annual report was published, PowerBI has been updated and the total number of stop and searches for 2022/23 has increased slightly from 6,949 to 6,958.⁷

A glossary is included on page 41 to explain some of the terminology used in the report.

⁵ During the reporting period, the Panel met every month to review the preceding month's activity. Therefore, this report covers the Constabulary's stop and search activity from 1 March 2023 to 29 February 2024.

⁶ Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 gives officers the right to search individuals within a specified locality, without any grounds for suspicion, in circumstances in which incidents involving serious violence may take place.

⁷ This is due to additional records being uploaded to the system after the data for a period has been compiled.



Panel members at their meeting in April 2024 at the Joint Emergency Services Academy in Stevenage

Profile of Hertfordshire

- Hertfordshire is a large county stretching from Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire to the north to the outskirts of London in the south. It borders Buckinghamshire to the west and Essex to the east.
- Hertfordshire has a population of 1,204,588. 28.2% of residents are from an ethnic minority compared to 26.5% in England as a whole.
- Urban areas make up around a third of Hertfordshire by area and account for around 89% of the population. There is no single dominant large urban centre. In total, there are 40 settlements with 4,000 or more residents in each.
- Hertfordshire Constabulary has Neighbourhood Policing Teams which operate in each of the ten Community Safety Partnerships. These represent the ten local district and borough councils: Dacorum, East Herts, North Herts, Welwyn Hatfield, Broxbourne, Hertsmer, Watford, Three Rivers, St Albans, and Stevenage.
- Hertfordshire has lower crime levels than the national average: 64.6 crimes per 1,000 residents compared to 82.2 in England (Feb 2023 – Jan 2024). However, levels of antisocial behaviour incidents are higher: 21.3 per 1,000 residents compared to 14.7 in England (Feb 2023 – Jan 2024).

See [HertsInsight](#) (ONS Census 2021 Data, ONS mid-2022 population estimates, April 2024) for references and more information.

2. Background

National Guidance

In 2014, the then Home Secretary introduced the Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme (BUSS) in response to concerns about police compliance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 Code of Practice A.⁸ The intention was to significantly reduce the use of stop and search, encourage more intelligence-led stop and searches, and improve stop to arrest ratios. BUSS remains in use and was last updated by the Home Office in 2021.⁹

In 2016, the College of Policing published its Authorised Policing Practice (APP) for Stop and Search.¹⁰ The APP is based largely on the provisions of PACE Code A, alongside the BUSS and recommendations from reviews of stop and search carried out in recent years by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the All Party Parliamentary Group for Children. Mandatory content in the APP that is based on Code A is legally binding. The APP was last updated in 2018.

Stop and Search in Hertfordshire

In August 2014, Hertfordshire Constabulary signed up to the original BUSS reforms, including measures to allow stop and search records to be scrutinised by community representatives through independent external scrutiny. Recognising the need for independent scrutiny and oversight, the Constabulary approached the OPCC to establish an external independent scrutiny panel. Following scoping work in November 2014, the OPCC set up the Panel in 2015.

The Panel's remit was to provide a voice for community concerns; and to help inform and influence police training around stop and search practices. The Panel today provides clear and transparent information for both Constabulary and community benefit; and enhances public confidence in police performance. This was borne out in the most recent HMICFRS Peel Inspection, published in February 2023, which found that Hertfordshire Constabulary has effective independent panels that scrutinise the Constabulary's use of stop and search.¹¹ HMICFRS' report on Section 60 and community scrutiny of stop and search, published in December 2023, highlighted Hertfordshire's stop and search scrutiny arrangements as "an example of innovative practice of a partnership approach to the independent community scrutiny of stop and search."¹²

The Panel's work is complemented by multiple additional strands of stop and search scrutiny undertaken by the Constabulary and external partners. The Constabulary's Police Powers Board, which meets quarterly and is chaired by a Chief Superintendent, has strategic oversight of the use of police powers, including the legitimate use of stop and search, and is attended by the Chairs of the OPCC's Scrutiny Panels. The Constabulary's Race Inclusion Board meets every month with

⁸ In 2014, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) reported that 27% of stop and search records they examined did not contain reasonable grounds to search people, even though many of the records had been endorsed by supervising officers.

⁹ [Best use of stop and search scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/best-use-of-stop-and-search-scheme)

¹⁰ [Stop and search | College of Policing](https://www.collegeofpolicing.org.uk/stop-and-search)

¹¹ PEEL 2021/22 An Inspection of Hertfordshire Constabulary, HMICFRS, p.10
<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/peel-assessment-2021-22-hertfordshire/>

¹² [Report on the Criminal Justice Alliance's super-complaint: Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and independent community scrutiny of stop and search \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115555/Report_on_the_Criminal_Justice_Alliance_s_super-complaint:_Section_60_of_the_Criminal_Justice_and_Public_Order_Act_1994_and_independent_community_scrutiny_of_stop_and_search.pdf)

senior officers and members of Black communities in Hertfordshire to oversee different areas of work around race and inclusion, including stop and search disproportionality. In addition, the Constabulary's Operational Strategy team undertakes internal dip-sampling of stop and search records, whilst supervisors dip-sample their officers' encounters to assess BWV and recorded grounds for stops. These activities combined mean that Hertfordshire has a robust and multi-faceted approach to scrutiny of use of police powers including stop and search.

3. Health Check

Significant progress (see Appendix B for further detail) has been made this year in implementing the recommendations made by the independent Health Check of the governance and operations of the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel (and Use of Force Scrutiny Panel), undertaken on behalf of the OPCC by Att10tive Social Enterprise.¹³

The Health Check concluded that in Hertfordshire the foundations and framework are in place to provide effective scrutiny and oversight of police powers. It identified areas of good practice and made recommendations for further areas of development. Those areas of development have been progressed at pace, but there is still more to do and further progress will be a key priority for the year ahead.

In particular, there will be a resolute focus on raising community awareness of, and involvement in, the work of OPCC scrutiny panels and continuing efforts to broaden the diversity of the Panels' membership by age, ethnicity and lived experience of the criminal justice system. These objectives will be delivered by a coherent, unified communications strategy sitting across all the OPCC's scrutiny panels. The Panel recognises that improving diverse attendance and membership must go hand-in-hand with considering what format panel meetings take in future. Meetings held during the day in a formal classroom setting will not always appeal to younger people and those with different work commitments.

4. Panel Membership and Leadership

The Panel's work has benefited from consistency in leadership and membership this year. Demitrius Nurse continues to serve as Chair of the Panel, with his initial two-year term running to April 2025. Mohammad Islam-Ruman continues to serve as Vice Chair. Alexander Allen recently stepped down as Data Champion for the Panel and a new appointment will be made shortly.

As of April 2024, the Panel has a total membership of 22 members, all of whom live, work or study in Hertfordshire. Over the course of the year, five members have retired from the Panel and seven new members have joined. The OPCC continues to advertise for and recruit new members on an ongoing basis. We have removed barriers that may prevent people with lived experience from participating in scrutiny panels, such as eliminating the requirement to go through formal police vetting to become a member, and we continue to explore ways to make panel membership as accessible as possible to the widest demographic.

In line with the Health Check recommendations, a coordinated approach to recruitment for the Stop and Search and Use of Force Panels was developed and delivered in the latter half of 2023.

¹³ Att10tive Social Enterprise <https://att10tive.com/>

Whilst that campaign generated significant interest in the Panels and attracted new and valued members, it did not significantly shift the dial in terms of diversity of membership.

Addressing this point will be an absolute priority in the coming year. Delivering diversity through recruitment will be a key tenet of the communications strategy described in the section above. In order to adopt a more proactive approach to recruitment, the OPCC has developed a 'mock panel' model that will be delivered in colleges and educational settings to bring to life the scrutiny process and engage proactively and directly with young people from less well represented communities throughout the county.

It is the Panel's target to reflect the demographics within Hertfordshire and we will continue to pursue a recruitment strategy that delivers as far as possible a Panel membership which echoes the thriving diversity in our county.

The following table provides a breakdown of Panel membership by gender, age and ethnicity compared against Hertfordshire's 2021 Census data:

Category	Panel	2021 Census ¹⁴
Gender		
Female	45.5%	51%
Male	54.5%	49%
Age		
16 – 24	4.5%	9.4%
25 – 39	0%	19.9%
40 – 54	18.2%	21.3%
55 – 70	40.9%	17.2%
70+	36.4%	12.5%
Self-defined Ethnicity		
White	81.8%	81.8%
Asian/Asian British	4.5%	8.6%
Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	9.2%	3.8%
Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African	0%	3.7%
Other Ethnic Group	0%	2.1%
Prefer not to say	4.5%	

¹⁴ ONS Census 2021 Hertfordshire: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/areas/E10000015/>



The Panel's March 2024 meeting in progress

5. Panel Training

We have continued to evolve and widen the training offer to Panel members this year. Before attending their first meeting as a Panel member, each member is required to undertake a mandatory training session which is jointly designed and delivered by the OPCC and the Constabulary. The training session gives Panel members the information required to conduct informed and effective scrutiny, providing them with an understanding of:

- Key national legislation around stop and search including PACE Code A, including what does and does not constitute reasonable grounds for a stop and search.
- Section 60 and Sections 10/11, including how these are addressed by the Panel in its scrutiny.
- Police procedure for stop and search, including GOWISELY and Hertfordshire Constabulary Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for written records.
- Panel governance and organisational arrangements for the Panel.
- The record selection and scrutiny processes, including the RAG grading system and what is expected of Panel members during meetings.
- The Panel's feedback loop with the Constabulary and the impact of its scrutiny on policing practice.
- The complaints process for stop and search, including how feedback and learning from the OPCC's complaints team is reported into the Panel on a quarterly basis.

When this training package is delivered to new members, it is also offered as a matter of course to all existing members as a refresher training opportunity. This helps maintain and further develop

members' understanding of police powers and ability to critically challenge and scrutinise the Constabulary's stop and search data.

Panel members are also encouraged at any point in their membership to participate in the Constabulary's Ride Along scheme, giving members the opportunity to join officers on patrol and experience daily policing first-hand to provide them with the operational context in which stop and searches are conducted across different scenarios. With the help of the Constabulary, the Ride Along application process for Panel members was streamlined this year, significantly reducing wait times between submitting an application and participating in the scheme.

We continue to work with the Constabulary to identify opportunities for Panel members to attend and observe officer training, not just for stop and search but for relevant wider topics such as Bias training. In December 2023 and January 2024, members from all OPCC Scrutiny Panels had the opportunity to attend 'Impact of Bias' training being delivered to frontline officers in Neighbourhood Policing Teams. This gave members additional insight into the training officers receive around how bias training is being used to minimise the impact of any assumptions, biases, or stereotyping and how that can impact decision-making in policing. Feedback from Panel members was extremely positive.

In line with the Health Check recommendations, the OPCC continues to explore how we can continue to improve and widen the training offer to Panel members to give them the best possible grounding to fulfil their scrutiny role effectively. This includes exploring what potential value might be added by external training providers to supplement what is already delivered in-house by the OPCC and Constabulary.

What is a Stop and Search?

When an officer stops you or your vehicle and searches you, your vehicle, or anything you are carrying.

Powers to stop and search must be used fairly, responsibly, with respect for people being searched and without unlawful discrimination.

What is the purpose of Stop and Search?

To enable officers to eliminate or confirm suspicions that an individual may be in possession of stolen or prohibited items, without exercising their power of arrest, and to provide safeguards for those who are searched.

What is reasonable suspicion?

Reasonable grounds for suspicion is the legal test which an officer must satisfy before they can stop and detain individuals or vehicles to search them. Reasonable grounds for suspicion will depend on the circumstances of each case.

There must be an objective basis for that suspicion to be based on facts, information, and/or intelligence that are relevant to the likelihood of finding an article of a certain kind. Reasonable suspicion can never be supported on the basis of personal factors. It must rely on intelligence or information about, or some specific behaviour by, the person concerned.

An officer has powers to stop and search you if they have 'reasonable grounds' to suspect you are carrying:

- illegal drugs
- a weapon
- stolen property
- something which could be used to commit a crime.

6. Meetings

Terms of Reference (ToR) are in place to guide the work of the Panel. As part of the implementation of the Health Check recommendations, these were reviewed and updated in 2023 to ensure absolute transparency around the remit, membership, governance, and types of scrutiny activity undertaken by the Panel. The revised ToR are published on the OPCC website.¹⁵

A Superintendent, Chief Inspector, Inspector and Sergeant (or combination thereof) from Hertfordshire Constabulary's Strategy, Performance and Transformation Department is present at all meetings to answer operationally specific questions from the Panel. In addition, CSP Chief Inspectors are invited to attend meetings during which stop and search records and BWV footage from their areas are reviewed during "deep-dives". They are accountable for any issues and

¹⁵ [ss-panel-terms-of-reference-oct-23-2024.pdf \(hertscommissioner.org\)](https://www.hertscommissioner.org/ss-panel-terms-of-reference-oct-23-2024.pdf)

concerns identified that are linked to their own CSP. As the Panel continues to conduct meetings at different venues across the county, Sergeants and PCs from Neighbourhood Policing Teams are invited to attend meetings as a matter of course to observe and understand the work of the Panel. Feedback from attending officers continues to be extremely positive.

As previously stated, the Panel met monthly during the reporting period to review the preceding month's activity. Therefore, this report reviews the Panel's activity from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, correlating to the Constabulary's own stop and search activity from 1 March 2023 to 29 February 2024.



Panel members scrutinising BWV of stop and searches as officers observe

Whilst Panel meetings follow an established format, they continue to evolve when required, reflecting the maturity of the Panel and its aim to always develop and strengthen the breadth, depth and impact of its scrutiny activity. Beyond standing agenda items (welcome, apologies, minutes and actions), the bulk of meeting time is dedicated to scrutiny in order to maximise the sum of scrutiny undertaken over the course of the year.

Appendix C sets out the totality of scrutiny processes which are undertaken at Panel meetings. At each meeting, the Panel dip-samples a selection of stop and search records. They will also assess the monthly summary data, in addition to scrutinising as a matter of policy a selection of BWV footage, all Section 60 authorisations, and all strip searches of a child (in line with recommendations made by the Children's Commissioner for England).¹⁶

¹⁶ [Strip search of children in England and Wales | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/stop-search-children/)

Countywide data was reviewed at each meeting in the reporting period. In addition, the following themes/scrutiny were undertaken by the Panel:

Scrutiny undertaken over the last year	
June 2023: Under 18 strip searches	December 2023: Under 18 strip searches
September 2023: Under 18 strip searches	March 2024: Under 18 strip searches
November 2023: Section 60, Three Rivers	

A well-established feedback loop between the Panel and the Constabulary continues to operate effectively, meaning that the work and views of the Panel have a direct and meaningful impact on the training and performance of officers on the ground. Following each meeting, all the Panel's scrutiny feedback is circulated to the relevant senior officers in the Constabulary, including the Chief Inspectors of the Local Policing teams and Professional Standards Department (PSD). Feedback is provided direct to individual officers, and where appropriate is also used to inform future training activities. The Constabulary representative at meetings then reports back to the Panel on agreed courses of action for individual incidents, to complete the feedback loop. In rare cases involving serious misconduct, procedures are in place to enable the Panel to refer an incident directly to PSD. Appendix D illustrates the feedback loop between the Panel and the Constabulary.

7. Key Findings

Stop to arrest ratio

In 2014, in line with national guidance, Hertfordshire introduced a package of reforms as recommended by the then Home Secretary to make stop and searches more intelligence-led and improve the stop to arrest ratio.¹⁷ Figure 1 illustrates how over time the number of stop and searches in Hertfordshire has reduced in parallel to an improvement in the stop to arrest ratio.¹⁸

During this reporting period, Hertfordshire Constabulary conducted 6,617 searches - a decrease of 5% on the previous year. 1,286 (19%) of these searches resulted in an arrest - a 1% increase in the arrest rate on the previous year.

Hertfordshire is fifth out of eight forces in terms of the number of stop and searches conducted within their Most Similar Force area (compared to fourth in the previous reporting period), as defined by the Home Office (see Appendix A).

How does Hertfordshire compare to other areas?

Compared to the Most Similar Force Group*, Hertfordshire is **fifth out of eight forces** in terms of the number of stop and searches conducted over the last year.

Within the Most Similar Force Group, Sussex has a comparable number of average monthly stops (539 compared to Hertfordshire's 545). However, Sussex has a 6.4% better arrest rate than Hertfordshire. For overall positive outcomes, Hertfordshire compares less favourably, 13.8% lower than Sussex (35.8% compared to Hertfordshire's 22%).

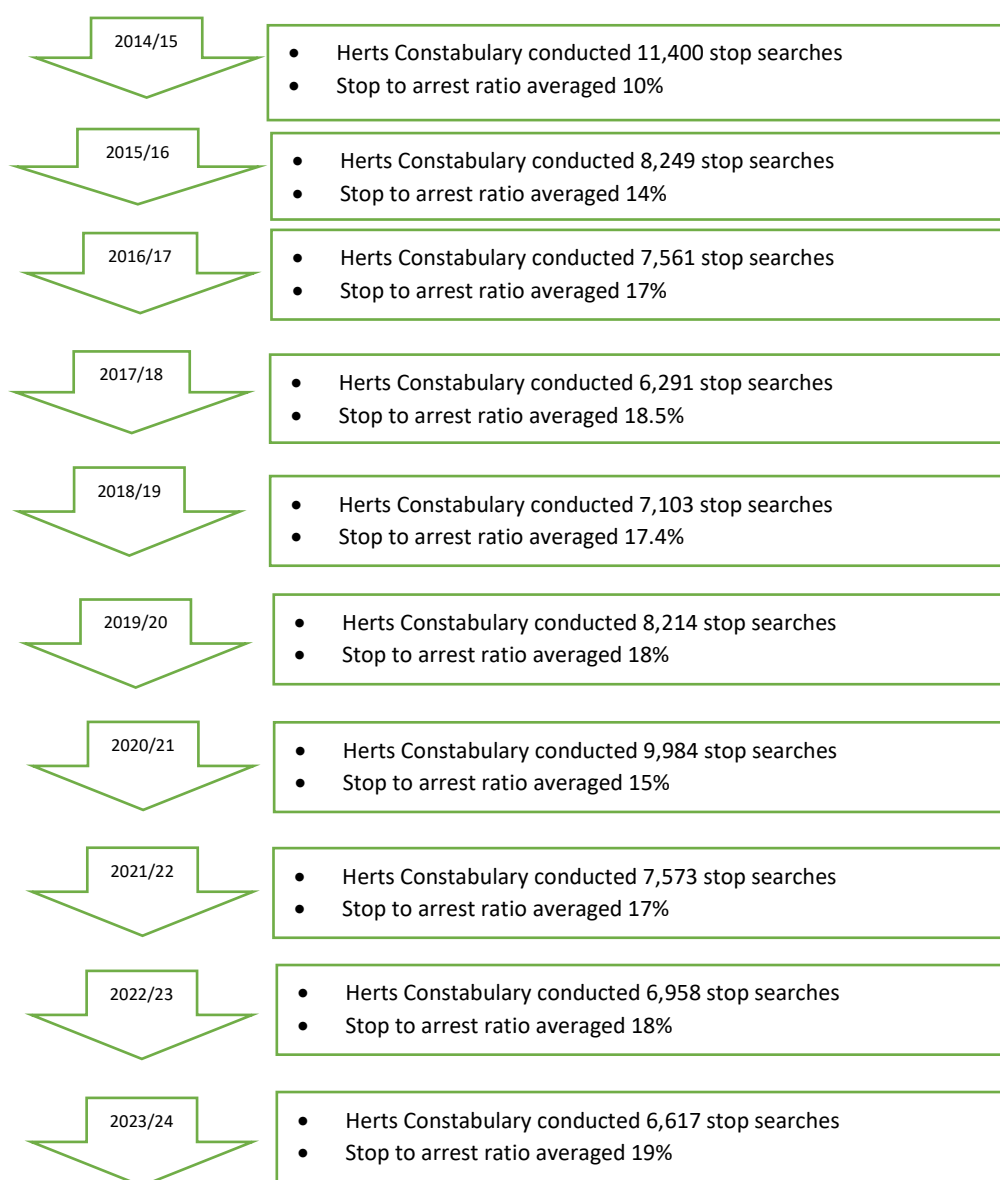
For more information, see Appendix A: Comparison of Stop and Searches figures from Hertfordshire and Most Similar Force areas (1 March 2023 – 29 February 2024)

**Most Similar Force Groups are determined by the Home Office. They are groups of police force areas that have been found to be the most like each other based on an analysis of demographic, social and economic characteristics relating to crime. For more information about Most Similar Force Groups and how they are formed, please see: [Data - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmip/)*

¹⁷ [stop-and-search-briefing-paper-for-police-and-crime-panel-2015.pdf \(hertscommissioner.org\)](https://www.hertscommissioner.org/stop-and-search-briefing-paper-for-police-and-crime-panel-2015.pdf)

¹⁸ For 2022/23, the number of stop and searches conducted has been updated to reflect the latest available figures.

Figure 1: Stop and Search arrest ratio in Hertfordshire (2014/15 - 2023/24)



(source: PowerBI, accessed 24th April 2024)

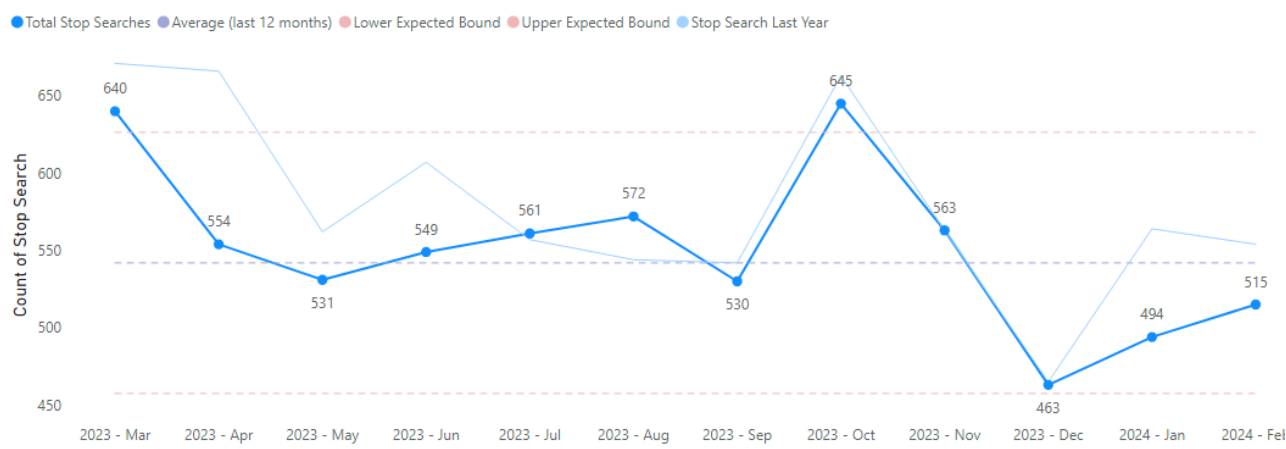
Number of searches

The number of searches conducted per month has fluctuated from a low of 463 in December 2023 to highs of 640 in March 2023 and 645 in October 2023. Figure 2 indicates some seasonal correlation with the pattern of searches in the previous reporting period, notably in March and October. The number of searches conducted in March and October 2023 were marginally beyond the Constabulary's modelled upper bound.

There are a range of factors which can lead to a stop and search taking place. These include reports from members of the public, police activity in the vicinity of a crime, a Section 60 being put in place, and credible, specific and recent intelligence that crime is affecting a defined area.

Figure 2: Stop and Search by month (2023 – 2024 compared to preceding year)

Stop Search by Month

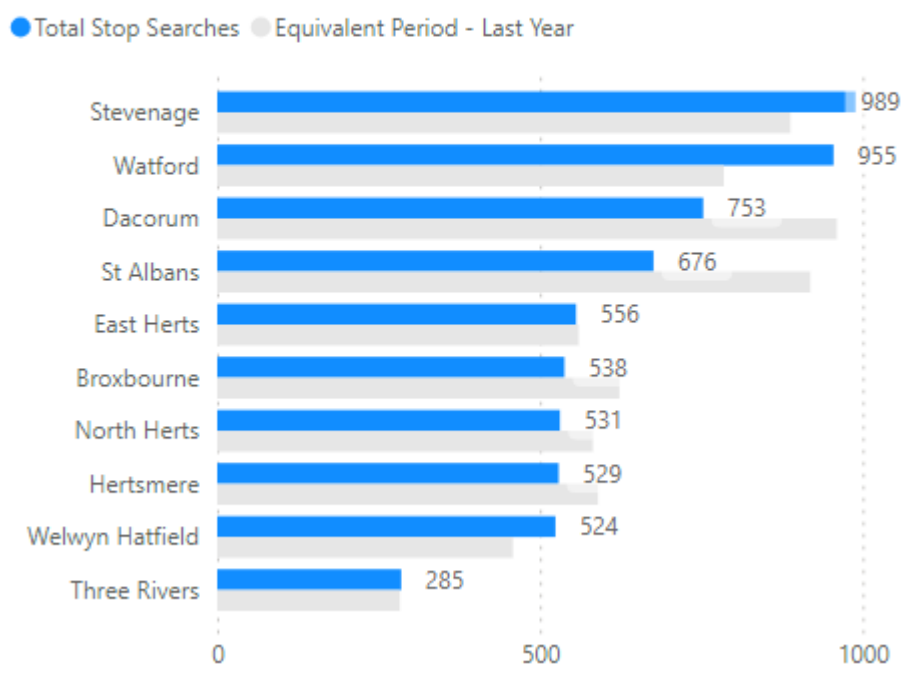


(source: PowerBI, accessed 24th April 2024)

Figure 3 shows the breakdown of stop and searches across the county's ten CSPs. This year, Stevenage conducted the greatest number of searches (989), compared to 960 in Dacorum in the previous reporting period. As with last year, Three Rivers carried out the fewest searches compared to other CSPs (285, an increase of 3 on the previous year).

Figure 3: Stop and Search Volumes by CSP (2023 – 2024 compared to preceding year)

Stop Search Volumes by CSP



(source: PowerBI, accessed 24th April 2024)

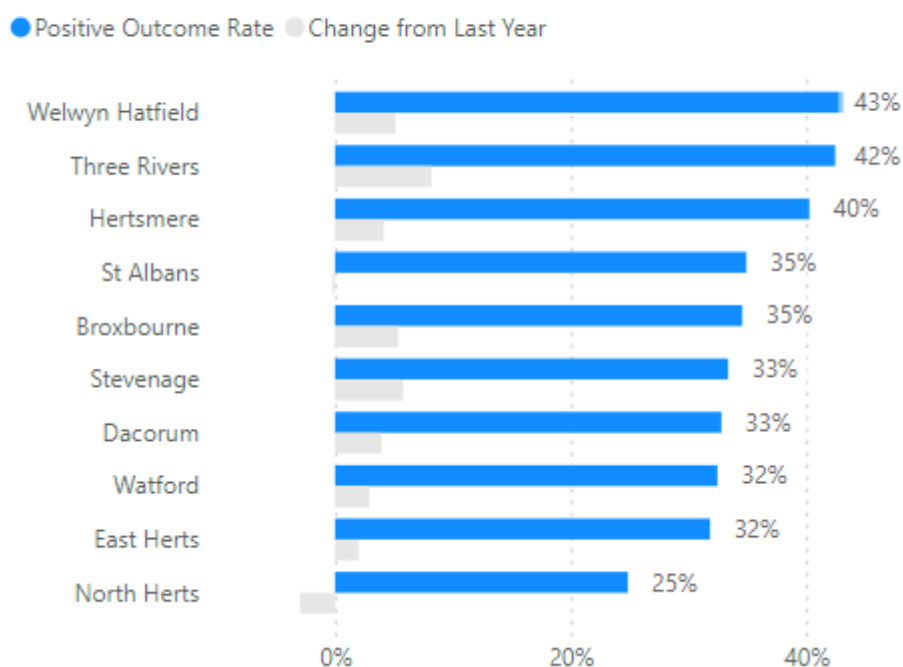
Positive outcome rate

Positive outcomes include arrests, plus out of court disposals, such as community resolutions or conditional cautions, which negate the need for individuals to be formally processed through custody suites. The average positive outcome rate for the year was 35%, an increase of 4% on the previous year.

Figure 4 summarises the positive outcome rate across Hertfordshire's ten CSPs. All CSPs saw increases in positive outcome rates compared to 2022/23, apart from St Albans and North Herts which witnessed small decreases in positive outcome rates of 0.2% and 3% respectively.

Figure 4: Percentage of total positive outcome rate by CSP (2023 – 2024 compared to preceding year)

Positive Outcome Rate



(source: PowerBI, accessed 24th April 2024)

In the 2022/23 annual report, Dacorum was highlighted as having both the highest number of stop and searches and lowest positive outcome rate across the CSPs. This year, there has been a 21.6% decrease in the use of stop and search in Dacorum (placing it third amongst CSPs) and a parallel increase of 3.9% in positive outcomes (seventh compared to other CSPs).

All CSPs have seen decreases in the total number of stop and searches conducted compared to the previous year, except for Stevenage (an 11.4% increase, from 888 to 989), Watford (a 21.7% increase, from 785 to 955) and Three Rivers (a marginal increase from 283 to 285). Stevenage and Watford combined accounted for 29% of all stop and searches conducted in the county in 2023/24.

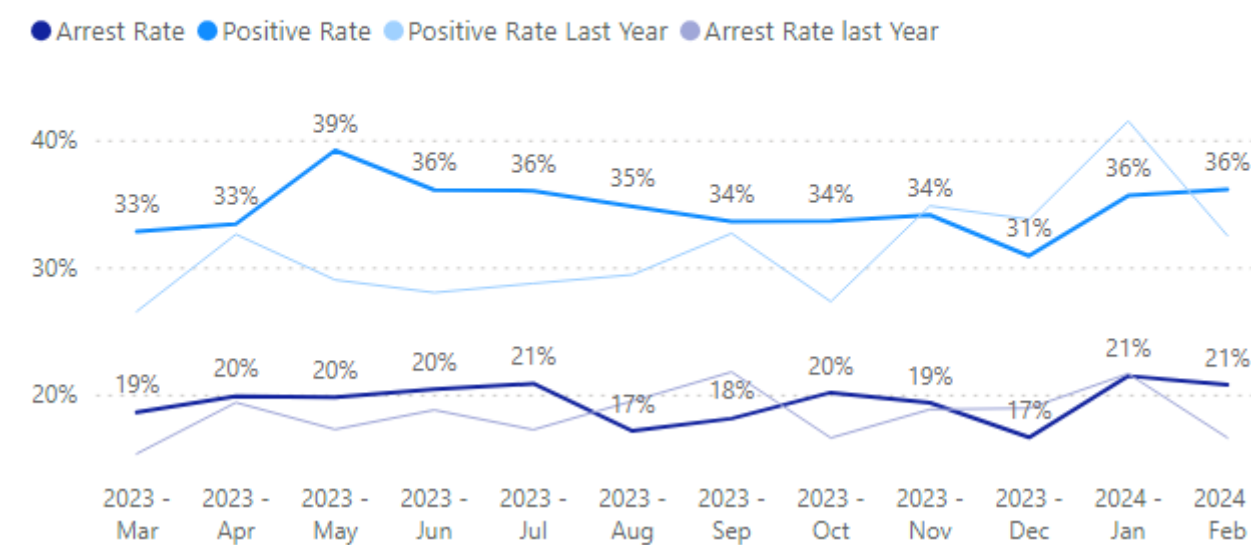
Of note was March 2023 when Watford accounted for 20% of the total number of stop and searches across the county.

Number of arrests and positive disposals

Arrest rates following a stop and search this year have been relatively stable from month to month, fluctuating between 17% and 21%. Figure 5 indicates that positive disposal rates are broadly in line with arrest rates. It also shows that positive disposal rates have been higher each month this year compared to last except for the period November 2023 to January 2024.

Figure 5: Arrest Rate and Positive Disposal Rate (2023 – 2024 compared to preceding year)

Arrest Rate and Positive Disposal Rate



(source: PowerBI, accessed 24th April 2024)

Panel scrutiny of stop and search records

This year, 433 dip-sampled stop and search records in Hertfordshire were scrutinised. This represents a 27.7% increase in the number of records scrutinised by the Panel on last year. The Panel assessed 6.8% of all stop and search records available, compared to 4.9% in the previous year.¹⁹ The records which the Panel review are taken from tuServ, the Constabulary's recording system which officers can access whilst out on patrol. The Panel review the written grounds, the time and location of the search and the powers which have been used.

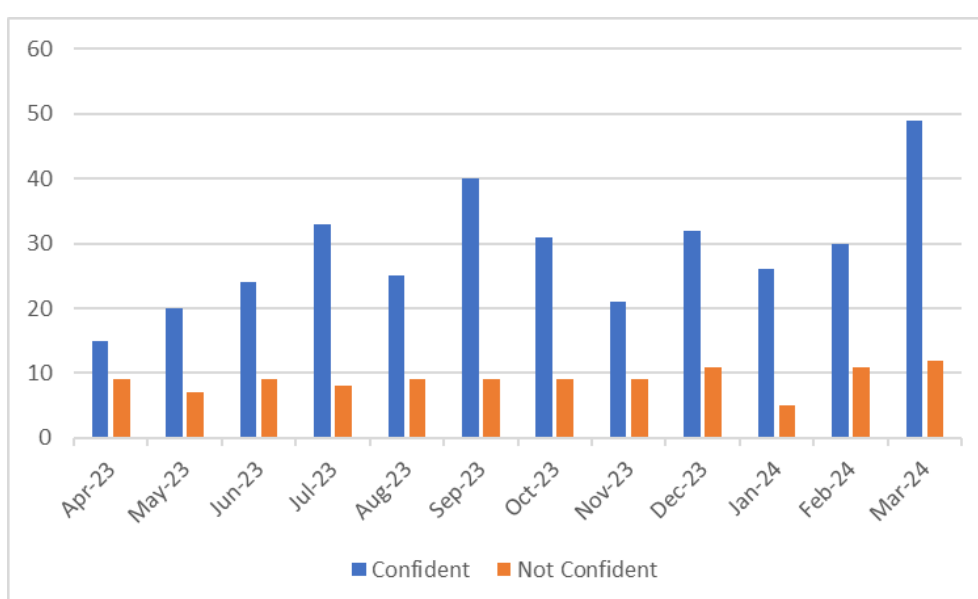
In line with the Health Check recommendations, the Panel has this year enhanced the strength of its scrutiny by implementing a RAG (Red-Amber-Green) grading system (see appendix E) for assessing stop and search records, moving away from the previous, more simplistic grading model of 'Confident / Not Confident'. Whilst this change in assessment model slightly complicates the task

¹⁹ The Panel scrutinises stop and searches that occur within the county, which this year accounted for 95.8% of all stops. Stops categorised as 'Out of Force', 'Roads Policing' and 'Unknown' are excluded from the dip-sampling process.

of comparing the Panel's position of confidence with previous years, it does enhance the granularity and value of the Panel's scrutiny. Crucially, it also delivers greater alignment with Hertfordshire's Use of Force Scrutiny Panel, allowing for more meaningful comparison to be made between the two Panels' assessments in the Constabulary's exercise of police powers.

If we take Green 1 (Excellent) and Green 2 (Satisfactory) in the new RAG grading system to denote Panel confidence, we can say that the Panel's position of confidence in the stop and search records (written records and BWV) scrutinised this year was 74.9% (an increase on 66.1% in 2022/23 and 66% in 2021/22).²⁰ For written records alone (to enable comparison with previous years when BWV was not reviewed by the Panel), the Panel's position of confidence was 75.4%.

Figure 6: Panel Confidence Levels in Dip Sampled Records (by month)



(source: Panel scrutiny data, accessed 24th April 2024)

The key themes in records in which the Panel was not confident remain consistent with those reported last year, chiefly:

- Insufficient detail provided by the officer, particularly around time and location and chronology of events.

²⁰ As noted in this report, the Panel has this year increased the amount of BWV it scrutinises. Consequently, some stop and search incidents scrutinised by the Panel this year received two separate gradings (a grading for the written record, and a grading for the BWV). The Panel will look to increase further its scrutiny of BWV in the coming year.

- Mentions of 'intelligence' without explicitly defining how recent that intelligence is or how it is relevant to the individual who has been stopped, e.g. the record might not state how the individual matches the description given.

Case Study of a record the Panel were not confident in

First attending officer noticed a car full of males acting suspiciously and a strong smell of cannabis. Detained for Section 23 search

Panel comments: Not enough detail, smell of cannabis alone.

The smell of cannabis alone does not constitute sufficient grounds for a stop and search but continues to be recorded by officers in written records seen by the Panel. This suggests there is a need for the Constabulary to re-double its efforts to ensure this is embedded in the mindset of officers.

The Panel now scrutinises as a matter of policy all instances of under 18 strip searches conducted in the county, in line with the recommendation made by the Children's Commissioner for England. Findings from this aspect of its scrutiny raised concerns at one meeting where under 18 strip search incidents presented to the Panel lacked any Inspector rationale as to why the strip search had been approved. In response, the Constabulary amended its Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) guidance to officers to reduce the risk of this happening again. This is a tangible example of the Panel's work having a practical and positive impact on Constabulary policy and practice.

Case Study of a record the Panel were confident in

A theft occurred at Sainsburys in which staff saw a male wearing a black bomber jacket, grey joggers carrying a cream bag running out of the fire exit to the rear of the store. Staff witnessed him running in the direction of the train station.

Officers made to the train station and found the suspect sitting on the steps cleaning a bag, suspect matched description and when spoken to was very cagey towards police, not really willing to engage, appeared sweaty as though he had just run. I have informed him that he was going to be subjected to a search due to matching description, at this point he stated there were stolen bottles of alcohol in his bag.

Bag search and items found.

Male was also searched for other stolen items or items used in theft, at this point he also indicated there was white powder namely cocaine in his pocket. Item found and seized.

Panel comments: Very well written with all necessary information (Description details could have been provided).

The Panel continues to recognise good practice as part of its scrutiny and regularly highlights records considered excellent to the Constabulary. Panel comments on records in which they are

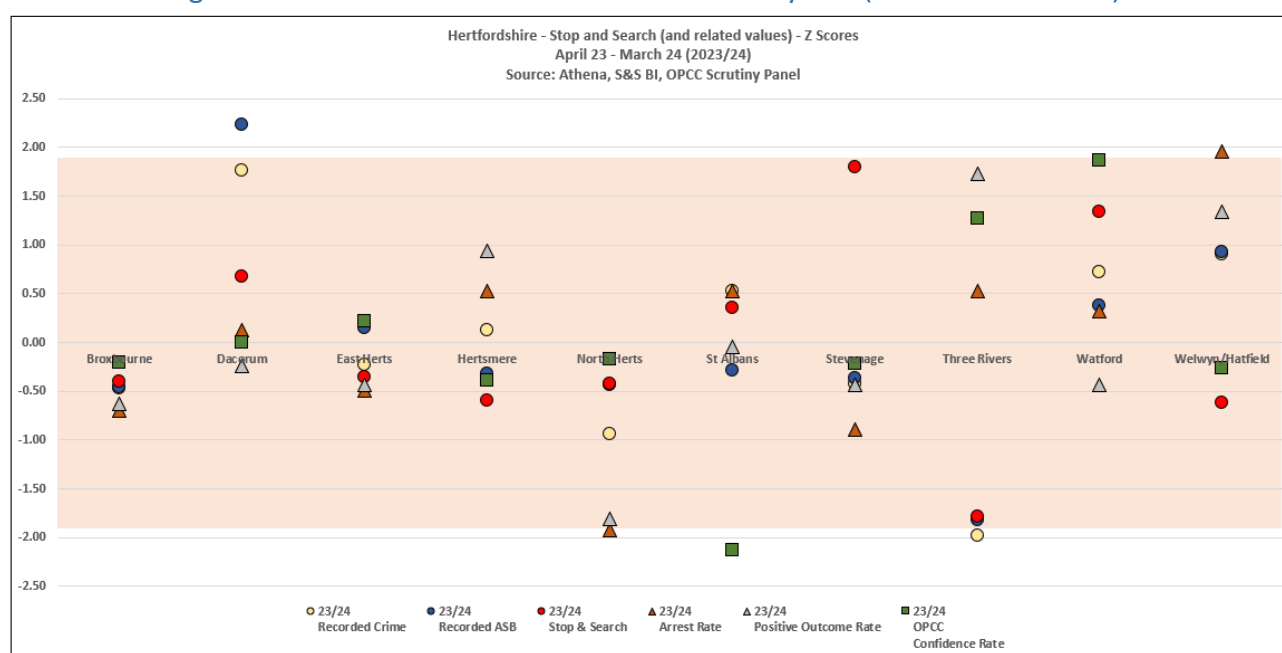
confident typically focus on two themes: the officer has provided a clear, concise narrative; and a precise explanation of the relevant intelligence and how it resulted in the stop of the individual concerned.

The Panel's assessment of records is shared with the appropriate CSP Chief Inspector as appropriate to feed back to their officers. (See Appendix D for a full illustration of the established feedback loop between the Panel and the Constabulary.)

Panel confidence by CSP

Figure 7 is a new graphic that has not featured in previous annual reports. It seeks to deepen our understanding of the Panel's scrutiny, particularly Panel confidence of scrutinised stop and searches by CSP. Broken down by CSP across the annual reporting period, Figure 7 plots the Panel's confidence level in stops scrutinised; overall stop and search volumes; stop and search arrest rates and positive outcome rates; and recorded crime and ASB volumes. (See footnote 21 for a brief description of how to understand and interpret the data).

Figure 7: Z-Scores for Panel Confidence Levels by CSP (and related values)²¹



Whilst very little sits either side of the normal variance zone (highlighted in peach), some interesting observations immediately become apparent which could serve to inform scrutiny at future Panel meetings:

- The Panel's confidence rate for St Albans (62%) is low compared to other CSPs. For those records for stop and searches made in St Albans that the Panel were not confident in, common themes included: lack of clear grounds or intelligence to justify the stop; confusing or non-consecutive narrative, meaning the Panel could not discern the proper sequence of

²¹ 'Z-Score' is a statistical measurement of a score's relationship to the mean in a group of scores. It is used to place often disparate (for example, percentages and numbers, very high and very low numbers) but related values on the same chart as a sort of level playing field where it is easier to see whether they may be exceptional and whether there may be any evidence of trends and/or correlation.

events; and scant or missing information, meaning the Panel did not possess the level of detail required to make an informed grading.

- Watford tops the CSP confidence chart (86%), whilst Three Rivers has a confidence rating of 82%. Panel confidence in stops in all other CSPs, broadly speaking, is consistent and hovers around the mean line which covers a range of 72% confidence in Hertsmere to 76% in East Herts.
- The positive outcome rate for stop and searches in North Herts is low, as also noted in figure 4 (25%); as is the arrest rate (10%) compared to, for example, Welwyn Hatfield (29%).

One important caveat to bear in mind when considering the Panel's confidence levels by CSP is that, compared to the overall volumes of stops conducted, the number of stops scrutinised is inevitably a relatively small proportion. In St Albans, for example, the Panel assessed 7.5% of the total volume of stops conducted in the district over the reporting period.



Panel members scrutinising written records with an officer observing

If we are to continue increasing Panel confidence in stop and searches, written records would need to, on a more consistent basis, include clearly stated grounds/intelligence justifying the stop; a clear and sequential narrative; and sufficient detail to enable the Panel to make an informed grading. The Panel also continues to find identical records where grounds are copied and pasted for separate incidents. The grounds for a stop and search should be relevant to the individual being searched and it is highly unlikely that the grounds for searching multiple individuals will be identical.

The proportion of records reviewed by the Panel which are copied and pasted has certainly reduced this year and that is a direct consequence of the Panel's feedback on this issue to the Constabulary, demonstrating that its work is having a direct and positive impact on stop and search practice in Hertfordshire.

8. Disproportionality

OPCC-commissioned report by the University of Hertfordshire

Addressing disproportionality in stop and search is an issue with which forces across the country continue to grapple, including in Hertfordshire. In February 2023, the OPCC commissioned the University of Hertfordshire to produce a report exploring police use of stop and search powers to find a better way to understand and measure disproportionality in the county. The report was finalised and published in March 2024 and is available to read and download on the Panel's webpage: [Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel \(hertscommissioner.org\)](https://hertscommissioner.org/stop-and-search-scrutiny-panel).

The research found that although there was some disproportionality around the stopping of young black men, the levels of disparity were the lowest when compared to Hertfordshire Constabulary's most similar forces. The report concluded that the majority of perceived disproportionality was explained by the geographical location of where the stop and search took place. Those areas with higher crime rates and a corresponding higher police presence match with those areas with a lower social economic profile. In Hertfordshire those areas also tend to have more ethnically diverse populations.

The research also found variation in the outcome of the search depending on an officer's perception of the individual's ethnicity, with those being less successful for individuals perceived as Asian and Black compared to where an officer perceives an ethnicity of White.

Although the findings would suggest there is better practice in Hertfordshire than other forces, there is still disparity and more work to do. The report is a springboard to move forward and identifies further questions and gaps in the data which need to be examined further. It is a starting point for exploring disproportionality in Hertfordshire, not the end point.

To that end, the Panel held a workshop on the report's findings as soon as it was published to agree how the research can be used to enhance its independent scrutiny of the use of stop and search powers. Two key actions were identified which will have a fundamental impact on the way in which the Panel conducts its scrutiny at future meetings – and in turn, its understanding of, and ability to probe and examine, disproportionality in Hertfordshire:

- The Panel will adopt a more targeted, data-influenced approach to its scrutiny. In addition to continuing to dip-sample stops, the Panel will dedicate a portion of scrutiny time at future meetings to assess the particular areas and groups identified in the report, selecting stops for scrutiny from those specific groups. Over time, this will give the Panel a robust and granular understanding of the different facets of disproportionality in Hertfordshire. This will include disproportionality "deep dives" to identify locations within the force where there is apparent disproportionality, to better understand the use of the powers and assess whether there are any behaviours displayed by the searching officers which cause concern.
- The Panel will strengthen its feedback loops with the Constabulary. It will continue to provide feedback on individual stops. In addition, it will extend its feedback mechanisms to comprise trends in stops. This might include requesting a Constabulary response supported with evidence when stops are identified as being particularly high in a certain

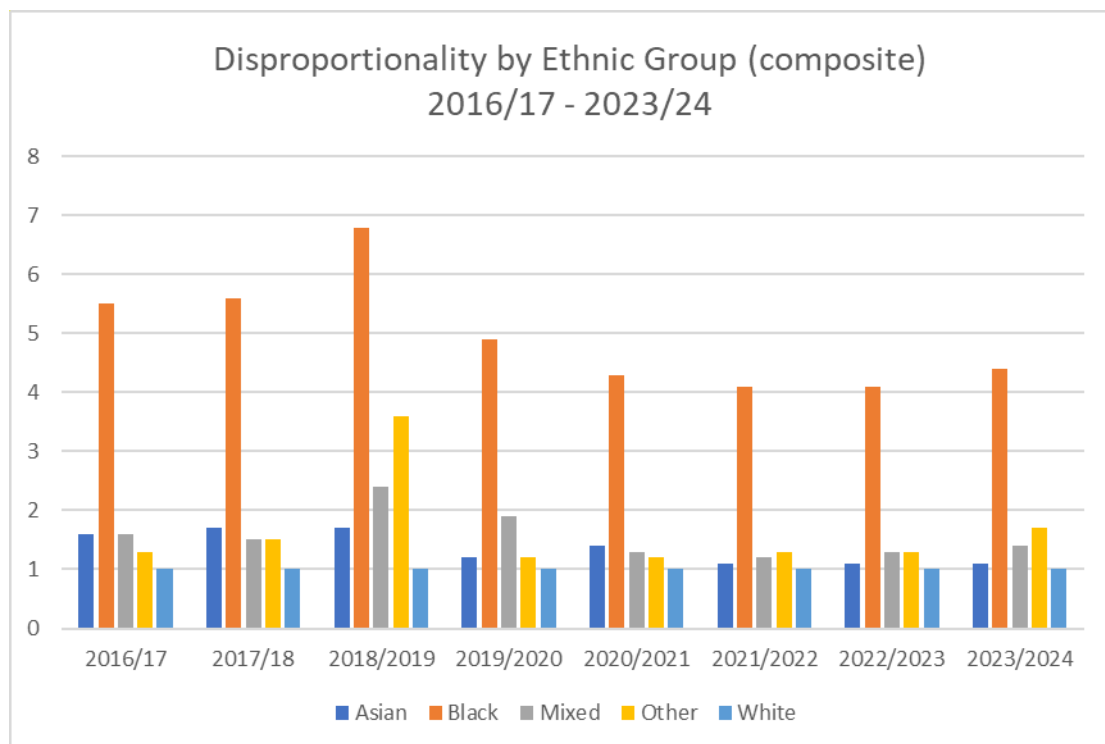
area or amongst a specific group. The issue would then be tracked over time to monitor change, with the Panel able to request additional updates from the Constabulary at future meetings.

Alongside these new scrutiny elements, the Panel will pose a set of questions to the Constabulary on the report's findings and any implications for policing practice in Hertfordshire. The Panel's work on disproportionality will be a key focus in the coming year, underpinned by a robust action plan to track progress and hold to account on delivery.

Constabulary data on disproportionality

Figure 8 reflects the latest data²² available from PowerBI, indicating stop and search disproportionality by ethnic group from 2016/17 to 2023/24. The disproportionality rate for Black people being stopped and searched reduced from 6.8 in 2018/19 to 4.1 in 2022/23, increasing slightly to 4.4 in 2023/24.

Figure 8: Disproportionality by Composite Ethnic Group



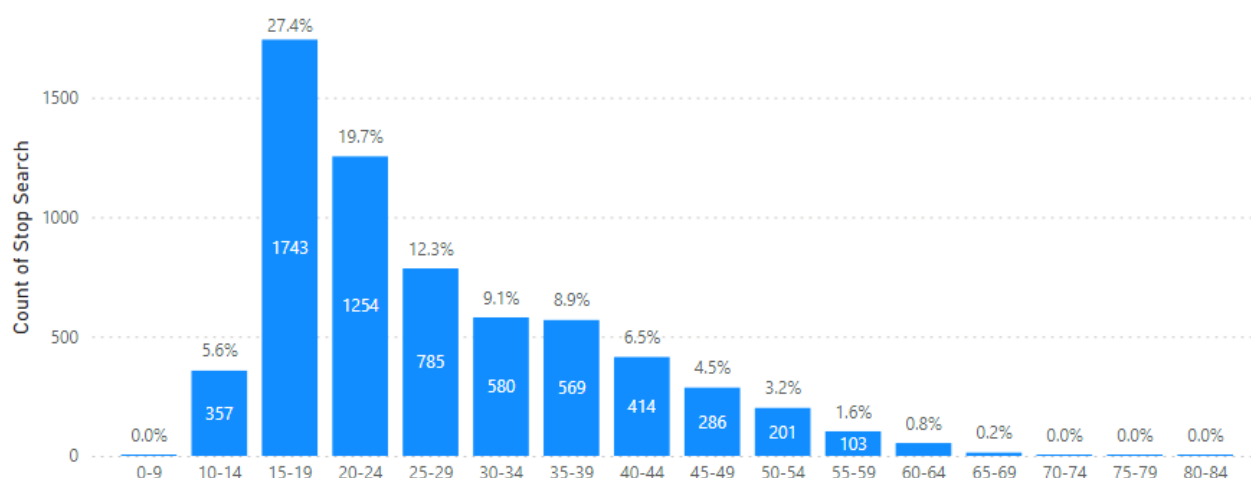
(source: PowerBI, accessed 24th April 2024)

Figure 9 illustrates that people aged 15 to 24 accounted for almost half (47.1%) of all stops in Hertfordshire in 2023/24, whilst figure 10 shows that in the same period the vast majority of stops (84.7%) were of Males. This is a slight decrease on last year's figure of 85.8%.

²² There are caveats to consider when reviewing disproportionality data. Those who are stopped and searched with no further action do not have to provide any personal information, e.g. their age, ethnicity and address. To augment any data given, officers are asked to use their judgement to record ethnicity: this is referred to as 'officer defined ethnicity'. The disproportionality data is composite data: if data has not been provided by the person who was stopped and searched then officer-defined ethnicity has been used. It also important to bear in mind that officer actions are also led by the intelligence they receive from the public.

Figure 9: Stop and Search by age (2023 – 2024)

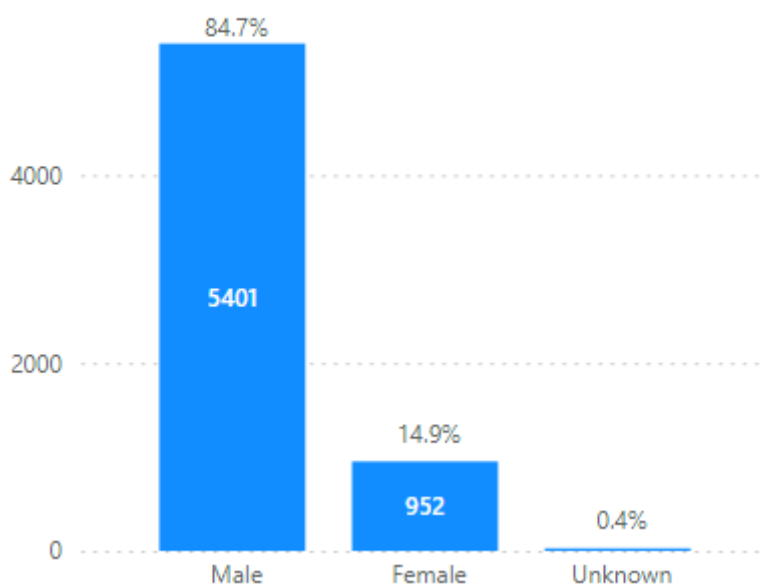
Stop Search on Person by Age Group



(source: PowerBI, accessed 24th April 2024)

Figure 10: Stop and Search by gender (2023 – 2024)

Stop Search on Person by Gender



(source: PowerBI, accessed 24th April 2024)

9. Body Worn Video (BWV)

The Panel has delivered on its commitment to scrutinise more BWV footage this year, in line with the Health Check recommendations. The aim is to continue increasing the amount of BWV assessed by the Panel year-on-year, to enable members to better identify trends in behaviour/compliance with PACE Code A.

The Panel assessed 32 pieces of BWV this year, compared to 18 in 2022/23 and 11 in 2021/22. Of the 32 pieces of BWV scrutinised, the Panel were confident (i.e. Green 1 or Green 2) in 27 records.



Panel members scrutinising stop and search records with an officer observing

Two common concerns were typically noted by the Panel during its scrutiny of BWV this year:

- On six occasions, the Panel felt that key details, such as the incident timeline recorded in the written record, did not correspond to the BWV viewed.
- On seven occasions, it was noted that GOWISELY could not be heard in its entirety.

On five occasions, the Panel noted officers for excellent conduct, particularly around being professional, calm, respectful and patient during the course of an incident. There were seven incidents where the Panel was confident in the BWV but not the corresponding written record, principally due to a lack of written rationale for a stop and a failure to link the intelligence to the individual detained.

The Panel has increased its scrutiny of BWV this year by using new venues to good effect, taking advantage of break-out rooms to enable smaller groups of members to concentrate their scrutiny efforts solely on BWV. This model has worked well and is one that will continue to evolve as the Panel is ambitious to keep increasing the amount of BWV footage it scrutinises at its meetings.

The Panel's focus on enhancing its scrutiny through BWV will continue, and is an approach that extends and complements the OPCC's wider remit of BWV scrutiny through the Use of Force Scrutiny Panel (which assesses and provides feedback on use of force incidents by viewing BWV in conjunction with officer statements) and the BWV Scrutiny Panel (established on a permanent basis in October 2023 to provide independent scrutiny and feedback on the use of BWV and officer decision-making across a range of incidents).

10. Section 60s

In line with best practice set out in the Home Office's draft National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels, the Panel reviews all uses of Section 60 as a matter of policy. There was only one use of Section 60 for the Panel to review during the reporting period, which took place in Three Rivers and was reviewed at the Panel's meeting in November 2023. A Detective Inspector from the local policing team attended to set out the decision-making process, to explain the outcome and take questions from the Panel.

What is a Section 60 search?

Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 is different to normal stop and search as it gives police the temporary powers to search people without reasonable grounds. This can only happen in a defined area at a specific time when a senior officer believes there is a possibility of serious violence, or weapons are involved.

11. Complaints

All expressions of dissatisfaction are initially logged by the Hertfordshire OPCC's Complaint Resolution Team (CRT). Those complaints which meet a certain risk criterion (including any relating to a stop and search) and any logged matters which cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction are referred to the Constabulary's Professional Standards Department (PSD).

In 2023/24:

- 27 complaints relating to stop and search were made by the public (a decrease of five on last year).
- 6,617 stop and searches were conducted in Hertfordshire. This means there was a complaint raised for 0.41% of all stop and searches (compared to 0.46% last year).
- Of the 27 allegations received, complaints related to both the legal grounds for the search and matters related to incivility. For example, complainants highlighted: use of force; discrimination based on race; individual officer behaviour of either being intolerant, impolite, unprofessional, or overbearing; or around delivery of duties and services relating to information or decisions.

There was no use of the Community Complaints Trigger²³ in 2023/24.

In April 2023, the Panel moved from a biannual retrospective review of complaints data to a frequency of quarterly reviews. One ambition for the coming year is to explore how, in addition to reviewing complaints data, the Panel can better utilise the rich data sets collected by CRT to enhance further its scrutiny of use of stop and search.

12. Conclusion

This report evidences the Panel's view that there are no serious concerns about the use of stop and search in Hertfordshire. Rather, the trajectory over recent years is one of improvement including the use of the power and the associated outcomes including arrest rates and positive outcome

²³ See Appendix C for further information about the Community Complaints Trigger.

rates. Notably, the positive outcome rate for stop and searches conducted this year increased to 35% - a 4% increase on last year.

This year has also been one of progress for the Panel itself as it continued to evolve and develop with the aim of strengthening the breadth and impact of its scrutiny. The Panel has continued its scrutiny role through regular meetings, increasing the proportion of total stops scrutinised this year on last. In parallel, it has enhanced the breadth of different types of incident scrutinised, assessing an increased amount of BWV and all Section 60 authorisations and under 18 strip searches, ensuring alignment with national best practice set out in the Home Office's National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels.

Whilst it is important to note the Panel's successes this year, its trajectory is one of continual improvement and development and there is further progress to be made. In 2024/25, the Panel will deliver on the following recommendations to enhance even further the role it plays in scrutinising the use of stop and search powers in Hertfordshire:

- Building on the findings from the University of Hertfordshire's report on stop and search, ensure disproportionality becomes a routine area of scrutiny.
- Adopt a more data-influenced approach to scrutiny work, making more sophisticated use of PowerBI to understand trends and anomalies and identify issues requiring further investigation – and tracking progress over time.
- Deliver a communications strategy spanning the OPCC's scrutiny panels to increase community awareness of and involvement in the panels' work.
- Find effective ways to deliver a more diverse Panel membership by ethnicity, age and those with lived experience of police activity.
- Continue to identify public venues for meetings to maximise opportunities for members of the public to observe the Panel's work; and working to establish effective, practical hybrid meeting options to help attract and retain younger, more diverse panel members.
- Continue to increase the sample size of BWV scrutinised at meetings.
- Work with the OPCC's CRT to understand how its rich data sets can be used to inform and advance areas of Panel scrutiny.
- Continue to implement the Health Check recommendations and adopt the Home Office's draft National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels to ensure that the Panel aligns with national best practice.

Progress against delivering on these recommendations is already underway and will be reported on in full in next year's annual report.

Appendix A: Comparison of Stop and Searches figures from Hertfordshire and Most Similar Force Group (1 March 2023 – 29 February 2024)²⁴

County	Average Monthly Stops %	Average NFA %	Average Arrest %	Average %+ve outcomes
Hertfordshire	545	77.9%	14.1%	22%
Avon & Somerset*	562	28.0%	43.9%	71.9%
Essex	1469	73.9%	12.8%	26%
Hampshire	1139	71.6%	12.4%	28.3%
Leicestershire	484	72%	16.4%	27.8%
Staffordshire	433	67.5%	16.2%	32.4%
Sussex	539	64.0%	20.5%	35.8%
Thames Valley	1276	77.4%	9%	22.4%

* For Avon & Somerset, only data up to January 2024 is available on www.police.uk.

²⁴ Please note that comparison with most similar forces is made using data.police.uk data submitted by forces through Crimemapper. This data does not match the reporting standards for Annual Data Requirement 150 (ADR150) through which internal reporting and annual reporting on the use of stop and search is made. As such, numbers in this chart do not correspond to PowerBI data referenced throughout this report. The latest ADR150 data is only available from 31 March 2023 and so does not support reporting on panel activity in 2023/24.

Appendix B: Progress Review on Last Year's Recommendations

2022/23 recommendations		Progress update
1.	Expanding the Panel's membership by aiming to recruit from a younger demographic as well as from communities that are less well represented, particularly those who are most likely to have contact with the police.	Work in progress. The Panel has expanded its membership this year, but further work is underway to enhance the diversity of its membership. (This will remain a high priority for the coming year.)
2.	Refreshing the governance arrangements of the Panel including the Terms of Reference and Panel Member Profile.	Complete. Refreshed terms of reference and member profiles have been completed. These are published on the OPCC website and reviewed annually.
3.	Developing an updated training programme for all Panel members.	Complete. The training offer to new members has been widened and regular refresher training is offered to existing members. We continue to identify opportunities for members to observe officer training. A streamlined application process has been implemented for Ride Alongs to make it simpler for members to participate.
4.	Developing a set of Key Performance Indicators for the Panel.	Complete. KPIs have been agreed and are used to inform the Panel's scrutiny work.
5.	Aligning the Panel's assessment criteria with the Use of Force Panel's RAG rating, including criteria around incivility for example, officer language, behaviour and attitudes.	Complete. A RAG grading system is in use and reviewed at regular intervals.
6.	Expanding and enhancing the scrutiny process for BWV.	Business as usual. The Panel has expanded its scrutiny of BWV this year and will continue to enhance this element of its scrutiny in the coming year.
7.	Asking Panel Members to be Ambassadors for the Panel by advertising their work and helping to grow the public's confidence in Hertfordshire Police.	Business as usual. Panel members will have a key ambassadorial role to play in the coming year. We will seek to enhance the Panel's diversity of membership through 'mock panel' sessions in colleges and educational settings. Panel members will have an integral role to play in delivering the mock panels alongside the OPCC and Constabulary.
8.	Working with the OPCC and Constabulary as appropriate to consider any findings from the	Complete. The Panel has agreed how to use the findings to enhance its scrutiny. Whilst this specific action is complete,

	University of Hertfordshire's research into disproportionality in stop and search.	disproportionality remains a live issue and is one that will become an established element of the Panel's scrutiny work in the coming year.
9.	In April 2023, the Panel agreed that moving forward, they will scrutinise all strip searches of a child.	Complete. The Panel has scrutinised all under 18 strip searches this year and will do so again in the coming year as a matter of policy.
10.	In April 2023, the Panel agreed to move away from the biannual approach to reviewing complaints data to a quarterly approach.	Complete. Complaints data is presented to the Panel on a quarterly basis.

Appendix C: Panel Meetings

During their meetings, the Panel may do any of the following:

The dip-sampling of stop and search records

Members will split into small groups of between two and four individuals to review a random selection of the stop and searches which have taken place in the preceding month in Hertfordshire. Each group is allocated a portion of the spreadsheet (for example up to 20 rows) from which they randomly select records to review.

They record their conclusions for each record on a feedback form, stating whether they were confident or not confident in the officer's grounds. Following each meeting, the feedback forms are processed and provided to the Constabulary's lead officer for follow-up with supervisors and officers.

Reviewing monthly summary stop and search data

Each month the Constabulary provide the Panel with data which outlines stop and search activity from the preceding month. The data pack includes:

- The number of stop and searches where the object of the search was found, as well as other property found.
- The gender of those stopped and searched for all stops.
- The total number of stop and searches (including a breakdown of ethnicity, both officer defined and subject defined), arrests and positive outcomes by CSP per month.
- The total number of stop and searches in relation to drugs and acquisitive crime per month and how many resulted in an arrest or a positive outcome.

Body Worn Video footage

The Panel also review some selected BWV footage. The Panel are provided with the correlating stop and search record, before reviewing the footage. Each clip is assessed against a series of prompts, including whether the record reflects what they saw in the footage and whether the officer complied with procedures appropriately. Following a group discussion, Panel members decide as to whether they felt confident or not confident in the appropriateness of the search and of the conduct of the officer(s) concerned.

Following the meeting, the feedback forms are processed and provided to the Constabulary's lead officer for follow-up with supervisors and officers.

Section 60 authorisations

In 2018, the Panel began reviewing Section 60 authorisations. Officers searching under Section 60 are not required to provide reasonable grounds for individual searches and therefore, there is no requirement for the Panel to scrutinise individual grounds. To ensure the Panel can fulfil their scrutiny function effectively, in line with the guidance under Code of Practice Code A and the Best Use of Stop and Search, the Panel are presented with the following:

- Overview of the application made to a senior officer and the rank of the authorising officer.

- Details of how the authorisation was managed.
- Outline of how, and through what means, the use of the power was communicated to the public/local community before (where practicable) and after its authorisation.
- Summary of activity during the period concerned. For example, the number of stop and searches, details of items found and positive outcomes.

Complaints

In accordance with the Best Use of Stop and Search guidance, the Panel are sighted on any complaints made by the public about a stop and search event which has undergone investigation and resolution by the Professional Standards Department (PSD) and/or the Complaints Resolution Team (CRT).

Twice a year, the Chief Inspector of PSD attends a Panel meeting to provide an oral update on the quantity and type of complaints made into their department. Additionally, the CRT provide a written update on the number of complaints made into the OPCC and through the Force Communications Room (FCR).

It was agreed by the Panel that a Community Complaints Trigger²⁵ will be issued if the number of complaints for a particular district is higher than one per month, with the Scrutiny Panel being given the option to do a further deep dive of these complaints. There have been no Community Complaints Triggers for the last year.

Strip searches of a child

PACE Code C²⁶ sets out the legal requirements for the strip search of a child. All children must be treated as vulnerable due to their age and safeguarding prioritised. A strip search should only be carried out in extenuating circumstances. The search must take place at a police station (not custody) unless there are extenuating circumstances with an appropriate adult present. A search may only take place in the absence of the appropriate adult if the subject signifies in the presence of the appropriate adult that they do not want them to be present and the adult agrees. A record must be made of the decision and signed by the appropriate adult.

In Hertfordshire, local policy states that no child can be strip searched without an Inspector's authorisation. This is in line with the Children's Commissioner's recent recommendation²⁷.

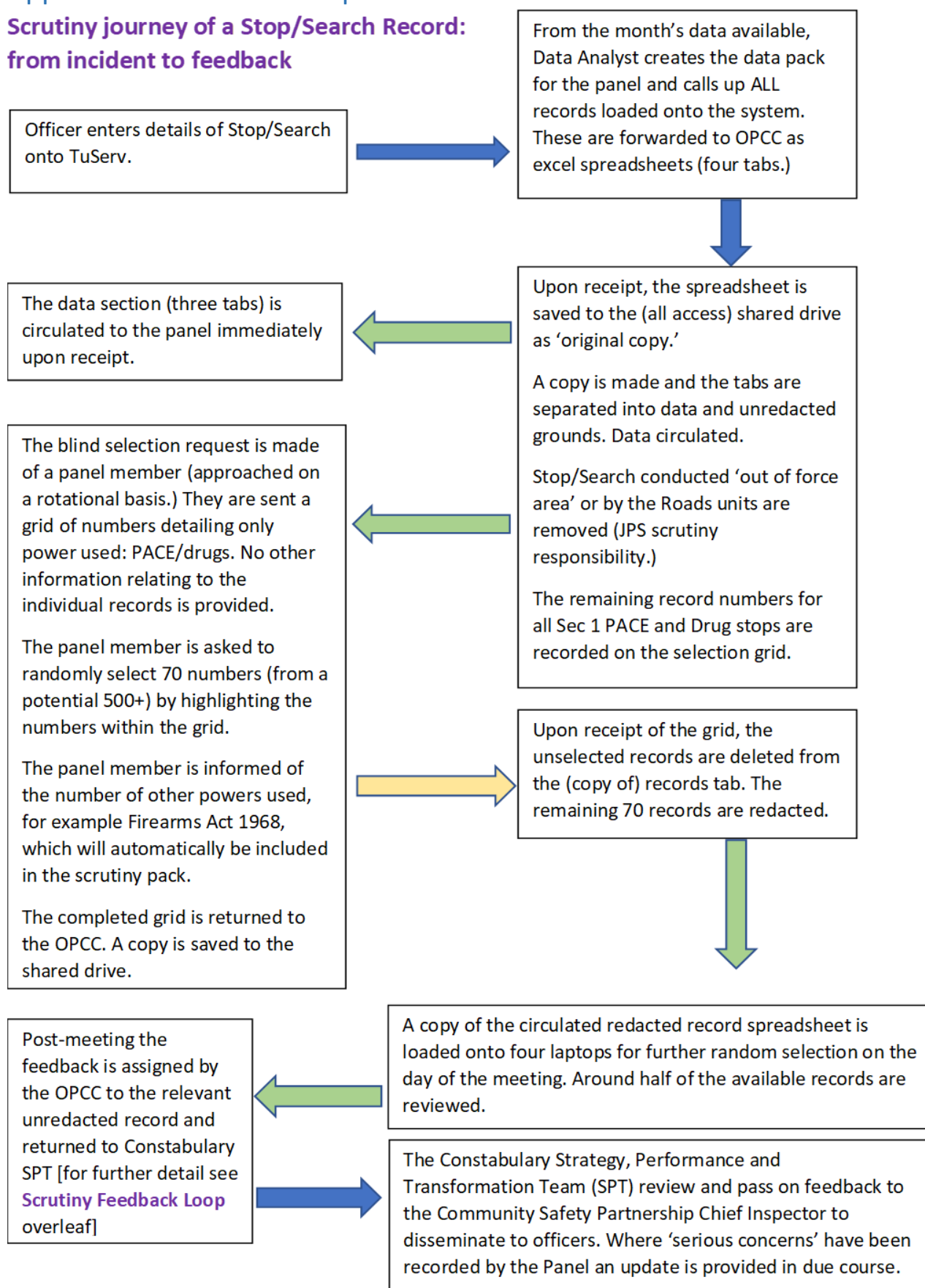
²⁵ The Community Complaints Trigger is a complaint policy that requires the police to explain to the community how the powers are being used if there is a large volume of complaints. This is in addition to the force complaints process. This allows for an independent review and ensures there is a response to any public concerns about stop and search activity in their community. More information about the Trigger can be found here - <https://www.herts.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/st-s/stop-and-search/sst/stop-and-search-trigger-application/>

²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/police-and-criminal-evidence-act-1984-pace-codes-of-practice>

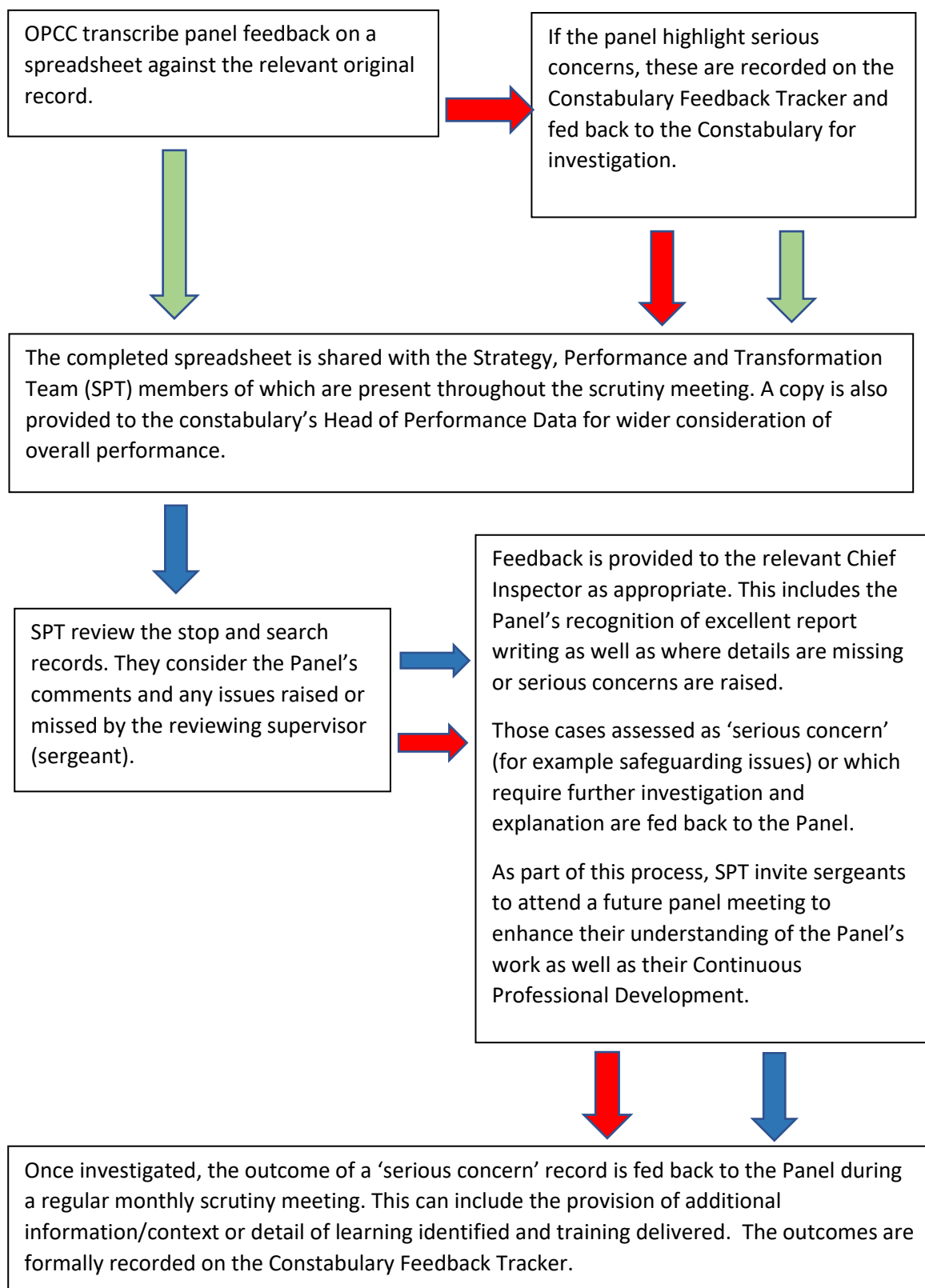
²⁷ <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resource/strip-search-of-children-in-england-and-wales/>

Appendix D: Feedback Loop

Scrutiny journey of a Stop/Search Record: from incident to feedback



Scrutiny Feedback Loop



Appendix E: RAG Grading Systems for Written Records and BWV

Written Record	
EXCELLENT <i>The grounds for the stop and search were evidenced and clear.</i>	<p>1. Panel members were able to make a straightforward judgement. The written report evidenced the grounds and the officer's decision making and justification were clear.</p>
SATISFACTORY <i>The grounds for the stop and search were correctly applied. However, the report would benefit from clarification.</i>	<p>2. The correct use of stop and search has been applied but the report would benefit from minor clarification*. Panel members should note what this is on the feedback form.</p> <p>* For example, timeline of events, descriptions of the person searched, proximity of people stopped to location</p>
NOT CONFIDENT <i>Panel members understand why stop and search was used but the report does not fully justify the search.</i>	<p>3. Panel members were unclear how the report related to the individual who has been stopped and searched and/or key information is missing*. Panel members should note the missing information on the feedback form.</p> <p>* For example, how the detained person matches the intelligence received</p>
SERIOUS CONCERNS <i>There were no clear grounds for the stop and search.</i>	<p>4. The written report does not contain the justification required for the stop and search.</p>

Body Worn Video	
<p>EXCELLENT</p> <p><i>The officer issued GOWISELY clearly and appropriately. They always acted with professionalism. The footage reflects the written grounds.</i></p>	<p>5. Panel members were able to make a straightforward judgement. The officer acted with professionalism and always treated the detained person with dignity. The footage reflects the written grounds.</p>
<p>SATISFACTORY</p> <p><i>The officer issued GOWISELY appropriately. They acted with professionalism. The footage reflects the written grounds. However, the interaction could have been improved.</i></p>	<p>6. The footage reflects the written grounds. The officer has behaved professionally but would benefit from minor improvement*. Panel members should note what this is on the feedback form.</p> <p>* For example, they rushed through GOWISELY or one part of GOWISELY was not clearly heard.</p>
<p>NOT CONFIDENT</p> <p><i>Panel members understand why stop and search was used but the written record only partially reflects the footage.</i></p>	<p>7. The footage only partially reflects the written grounds. Panel members agreed that the interaction would have been satisfactory but have minor concerns around the language* or behaviour used by the officer. Panel members should note this on the feedback form.</p> <p>*For example, unnecessary swearing.</p>
<p>SERIOUS CONCERNS</p> <p><i>There were no clear grounds for the stop search and/or the officer's professionalism was of serious concern.</i></p>	<p>8. The footage does not reflect the written grounds. Panel members have serious concerns about the search and/or the officer's professionalism.</p>

Glossary of Terms

Terms	Acronym (if applicable)	Description
Best Use of Stop and Search	BUSS	The Best Use of Stop and Search scheme was announced by the Home Secretary in 2014. The scheme introduced a number of measures designed to create greater transparency, accountability and community involvement in the use of stop and search powers.
Body Worn Video	BWV	The cameras which officers wear to capture both video and audio evidence.
Complaint Resolution Team	CRT	Complaints about Hertfordshire Constabulary are initially by the Complaint Resolution Team (CRT). If a complaint can be handled outside of Schedule 3 of legislation the CRT will attempt to service recover the complaint. If a complaint needs to be formally recorded within Schedule 3 of legislation due to its nature, then it will be forwarded to the Professional Standards Department in Hertfordshire Constabulary who will handle all these matters.
Community Safety Partnership	CSP	Community Safety Partnerships are made up of representatives from the police, Local Authorities, fire and rescue authorities, health and probation services (the 'responsible authorities'). The responsible authorities work together to protect their local communities from crime and to help people feel safer.
Force Communications Room	FCR	The Force Communications Room is responsible for taking emergency and non-emergency calls, recording crime and deploying resources to incidents
GOWISELY	GOWISELY	The national mnemonic ²⁸ is a prompt for officers to remind them of the reasonable steps they must take before conducting a search: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounds for the search (reason for suspicion) • Object of the search (i.e., what is being looked for) • Warrant number, (if not in uniform) • Identification (officer's name except in terrorism cases when the force number only will be given. Police officers not in uniform will show their warrant cards) • Station to which the officer is attached. • Entitlement to copy of search within 3 months or 12 months in the case of Section 60 • Legal Power being exercised. • 'You are detained for the purpose of a search' (person searched must be informed of this)

²⁸ <https://www.college.police.uk/app/stop-and-search/professional>

Microsoft PowerBI		Power BI is an interactive data visualization software product developed by Microsoft with primary focus on business intelligence.
Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner	OPCC	The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner helps the Commissioner to discharge their statutory duties and deliver their Police and Crime Plan. Office staff are politically restricted. This includes being a member of a political party.
Police & Crime Commissioner	PCC / the Commissioner	The role of the Commissioner is to be the voice of the people and hold the police to account. They are responsible for the totality of policing. Commissioners aim to cut crime and deliver an effective and efficient police service within their force area.
Police & Criminal Evidence Act Code A	PACE Code A	PACE Code A covers police powers to stop and search persons and vehicles and the requirements for officers to make a record of a stop or encounter.
Positive Outcome		Positive outcomes, include arrests, as well as out of court disposals. An out of court disposal may be a community resolutions or conditional cautions, which negate the need for individuals to be formally processed through custody suites. These cautions or resolutions may involve fines, behaviour change programmes or victim reparation.
Professional Standards Department	PSD	The Professional Standards Department consists of Complaints, Misconduct, Anti-Corruption and Vetting, all committed to maintaining and improving public confidence and quality of service, protecting and enhancing the integrity of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire forces
Red, Amber, Green rating	RAG	Also known as 'traffic lighting,' this rating system is used to summarise indicator values, where green denotes a 'favourable' value, red an 'unfavourable' value and amber a 'neutral' value.
Section 60	S60	<p>Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 is different to normal stop and search as it gives police the temporary powers to search people without reasonable grounds. This can only happen in a defined area at a specific time when a senior officer believes there is a possibility of serious violence, or weapons are involved.</p> <p>This means anyone in that area, for example, near a football ground, may be searched for weapons without the police officer having reasonable grounds for each person searched.</p>
Stop and Search	S&S	<p>A police officer has powers to stop and search you if they have 'reasonable grounds' to suspect you are carrying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • illegal drugs • a weapon

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• stolen property• something which could be used to commit a crime, such as a crowbar
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Independent Dog Welfare Visitors Scheme

Annual Report

2023 – 2024



**Foreword by Darryl Preston, Police and Crime Commissioner for
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.**



Over the last year, Independent Dog Welfare Visitors have continued to provide essential and robust scrutiny of the care and treatment of police dogs. They ensured that procedures are ethical, humane, and transparent in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

The welfare scheme continues to operate an effective and transparent scheme, intended to maintain public confidence and assurance to the residents of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire that police dogs are being well cared for.

This annual report highlights a positive working relationship between the Dog Unit and the Welfare Visitors.

My Office have been responsible for Administering the scheme on behalf of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire.

Community Visitors are vital for supporting my scrutiny work and helping me to hold the force to account on behalf of the public.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Preston', written on a white background.

Darryl Preston, Police and Crime Commissioner

Background to the Scheme

The Dog Welfare Scheme has evolved over time, resulting in the establishment of the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Hertfordshire (BCH) Independent Dog Welfare Visiting Scheme. Its development started in Hertfordshire when the first independent visiting scheme was set up in 2006. In 2009 this became a collaborated scheme when Bedfordshire joined the scheme. Luton International Airport (LIA) joined the scheme two years later with Cambridgeshire joining the scheme in 2012. That same year, responsibility for the scheme was passed to the newly elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), with Hertfordshire's Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) retaining administrative responsibility for the Scheme on behalf the three PCCs.

In the spirit of collaboration, during 2023-24, administration for the scheme was passed to Cambridgeshire. This shared the responsibility and continued the effective collaboration and cooperation across the three Forces.

In April 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) set out the nationally agreed minimum standards for all police forces and their Chief Constables who have police dog units. For Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Hertfordshire (BCH), this is a collaborated dog unit. The new national standards for the deployment and care of police dogs and the Authorised Professional Practise (APP) are embedded within this Annual Report. These streamline the previous guidance and mandates minimum standards, which brings the specialism in line with other similar areas of policing and bring gives recognition to the speciality of the police dog capability.

The standards rightly place a significant emphasis on the welfare and care of police dogs, highlighting the necessity to recognise their individual. They dedicate a lifetime of service, working alongside police officers and staff in keeping our communities safe. These standards will be subject to regular review through the Police Dog Policy Sub-Group, ensuring policy, training, accreditation, and emerging threats are incorporated and remain current.

Independent Dog Welfare Visitors continue to provide essential scrutiny into the wellbeing and care of our Police Dogs across BCH. With a team of over fifty dogs spread across three counties who provide 24/7 policing, handlers hold a unique specialist role within the policing family, taking their partner home with them. They are committed, dedicated, enthusiastic and professional with an overwhelming love and respect for dogs.

Overview of the Scheme

Cambridgeshire OPCC took over the administration of the scheme in July 2023, supported by both Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire's OPCC.

The aim of the scheme is to inspect the welfare of every police dog, this includes those due to retire. There are currently fifty-one dogs across BCH and thirteen based at LIA. Visits are based on a 10-week rotation. If a dog misses a scheduled visit, they are either added to an alternative scheduled visit or an added visit is arranged. Visits may be missed due to Handlers being on annual leave, sickness, or work commitments. It is expected all dogs will be seen twice a year although additional visits will be arranged if any concerns arise. A few of the dogs have been seen more frequently as they have supported in our volunteer training and enabled additional shadow visits.

Independent Dog Welfare Visitors are members of the public who observe, comment and report on the condition of the dogs and their means of transportation whilst on duty. To maintain the scheme's independence and avoid any conflict of interest, visitors have no direct involvement with the three forces. Welfare visitors are not allowed to be a serving or retired police officer, a member of police staff, police community support officer, special constable, or magistrate.

Welfare visitors carry out inspections on all police dogs within the Dog Unit. The Unit includes General Purpose Police Dogs which are deployed for searching, tracking, arrest work and crowd control. A number of these dogs are trained to work with firearms officers. Both the Dog Unit and LIA Team include dogs that specialise in detecting drugs, cash, guns, weapons, explosives, and digital media.

In February, this year we were delighted to receive confirmation from the Dogs Trust to say we are a recognised and monitored Animal Welfare Scheme. Dogs Trust ensures that the scheme is running in accordance with its guidelines and awards those who are complying with the scheme a certificate of compliance. Only those forces that are members of the Animal Welfare Independent Visitors Scheme are allowed to adopt or rehome dogs from Dogs Trust.



Recruitment and Training Independent Dog Welfare Visitors.

Currently the scheme has eight Independent Dog Welfare Visitors providing representation from across BCH. All welfare visitors are required to be vetted before appointment and that is reviewed every three years.

There is comprehensive training programme for new welfare visitors. This includes briefings from the Dogs Trust on training methods, animal welfare, transportation, health, and safety. Any new Visitors must complete a six-month probation period to ensure they understand the monitoring arrangements and can carry out visits with confidence. New welfare visitors will carry out at least one shadow visit with one of our experienced welfare visitors, more if needed until they are comfortable conducting visits on their own. There is an ongoing training programme and support is provided for all our welfare visitors.

In March, this year two members of the scheme also attended Enrichment Continuous Professional Development (CPD) online training. This was delivered by the Dogs Trust and added an additional layer of knowledge which members found useful.

Welfare Visitors do not receive a salary but are reimbursed for any out-of-pocket expenses incurred when undertaking a visit.

Meetings

Quarterly meetings are held between Animal Welfare Scheme Leads from Essex, Kent and Cambridgeshire (Cambridgeshire lead on behalf of BCH) meetings are also held regularly between BCH Dog Unit and LIA Leads and BCH Scheme Lead, constantly looking at ways to improve the scheme and share good practice across Forces. Now we have a larger team of Visitors we are looking to hold Bi-annual Panel Meetings with Visitors and representatives from the BCH Dog Unit and LIA Team. This will be an opportunity to make Visitors aware of any legislative changes and updates from the Dog Unit, as well as for the unit to receive feedback directly from Visitors.

Welfare Visting Arrangements

Welfare visits are arranged for an agreed location on any given date and time by the Dog Unit, LIA representative and the Scheme Administrator. Visits primarily take place at the three-force headquarters and at a facility at Luton Airport, although this can vary, and other locations can be used. The times of visits may also vary at short notice, for example, handlers will not train during extremely hot weather conditions therefore visits may be carried out early morning when temperature is cooler.

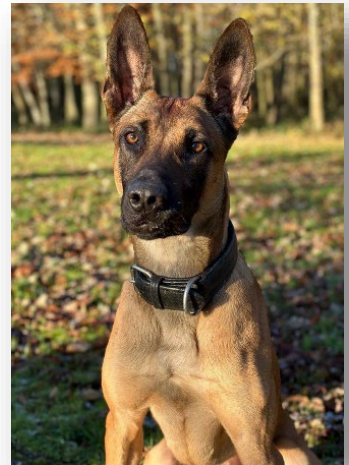
In advance of their visit, Welfare Visitors are informed of which dogs are available to be seen and given access to comments from earlier visits by the Scheme Administrator. This enables Welfare Visitors to follow up on any health or welfare issues previously highlighted. Visits are also arranged prior to the retirement of any of the dogs, one retirement visit has been carried out this year.

The visits took place at various locations across the three forces with a variety of different environments, its vital that the dogs train in different environments to ensure they are confident when carrying out their duties.

Reporting and Recording

Visitors record all observations, comments and any concerns relating to individual welfare needs on a report which covers five welfare needs. These are their;

- need for a suitable environment
- need for a suitable diet
- need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns.
- need to be housed with or apart from other animals.
- need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury, and disease.



Completed reports are counter-signed by the handler who has an opportunity to record any further observations and details. These are then sent to Scheme Administrator for oversight.

If a welfare issue is reported, the Scheme Administrator will raise this directly with the Dog Unit or LIA Team. Concerns can also be escalated directly within each of the Office of Police and Crime Commissioners and the Constabularies. Any action taken to resolve issues is recorded by the Scheme Administrator. All information noted on the report form or gathered at the visits is confidential for use by the Office of the Police Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and the Dog Unit. General welfare updates are shared across the three Forces, and this is logged on individual Police Dog Profiles. The profiles include due dates for vaccinations, worming, flea treatment any visits to the vet is recorded along with any medication taken, regular weight checks are also recorded. There is also a photo of each dog along with, breed, microchip number and the role of the dog. Handler's name is also included in this profile.

Visits from the past year

Between April 2023 and March 2024, welfare visitors completed eight visits, which included visiting one of the dogs prior to him retiring from the Unit. In total forty-four dogs have been seen across the three counties. The availability of welfare visitors has restricted the ability to conduct the required level of visits. It was for this reason that it was decided to increase the team numbers to ensure there is the level of

resources available to carry out more frequent visits, with the objective of visiting all dogs. This is the ambition for 2024-25.



Dog Welfare Findings

Welfare visitors check the condition of the police dogs and their means of transportation while on duty. Over the last 11 months of the forty-four dogs visited, no serious concerns were recorded, it was noted that one of the dogs had been spayed, with no concerns and had made full recovery, dental work on of the older dogs, one dog had sore foot pad, all dogs were treated quickly and effectively and there has been no long-term effects of any of these reported issues.

Welfare visitors recorded positive comments about the general welfare of the dogs, up-to-date vaccinations, and health checks. Welfare visitors also commented positively on the healthy weight of the dogs, their movement, the condition of their coats as well as the good rapport between dogs and handlers.

Complaints

Complaints made directly to the individual Constabulary or the OPCC are handled in line with local complaint handling procedures.

If a welfare visitor receives information or a complaint in confidence about the welfare of a dog, they must send it at once to the Scheme Administrator who will arrange for the matter to be handled in line with the local handling procedures.

Looking forward.

In April 2024, the NPCC set out the nationally agreed minimum standards for all police forces and their Chief Constables who have police dog units. We will use these minimum standards and the APP in support of the welfare visits to ensure compliance, with an emphasis upon continuous improvement. We will increase the

skills of our welfare visitors, working with them to improve reporting and recording procedures.



Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs' 'Code of Practice' (2017) categorisations

a) Need for a suitable environment.

- Provide dogs with safe, clean environments with adequate hazard protection.
- Provide dogs with a comfortable, clean, dry, quiet, draught-free rest area, somewhere to go when frightened and access to a suitable toilet area, away from its rest area, to use as often as needed.
- Ensure that any place in which dogs are left is large enough to provide, at all times, a comfortable area with effective ventilation and temperature control, and that the dogs can move around to ensure comfort, avoiding becoming too hot or too cold.
- When transporting dogs, ensure they are always comfortable and safe.
- Do not leave dogs unattended in any situation, or for any period which is likely to cause them distress.

b) Need for a suitable diet.

- Provide dogs with clean, fresh drinking water at all times, carrying it with you if it is unlikely to be available.
- Dogs should be able to reach food and water easily in all situations.
- Provide dogs with balanced diets that meet their individual requirements or special feeding needs, and ensure they maintain a stable, healthy weight.
- Be aware of any changes in the amount dogs eat or drink, as potential signs of ill health.
- Dogs should not be fed shortly before, or after, strenuous exercise.

c) Need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals.

- Make sure that dogs have opportunities to socialise with people and friendly dogs, not being left alone long enough to become distressed.
- If dogs are fearful of, or aggressive towards, other dogs, or distressed or frightened by social encounters, avoid these situations, and seek advice.
- Handle dogs properly, and ensure they are not stressed or endangered by other people or animals or leave them unsupervised with animals or people who may harm or frighten them.
- Be consistent in the way you and those around you react to dogs.

d) Need to be able to show normal behaviour patterns.

- Make sure that dogs have enough to do so they do not become distressed or bored through access to safe toys and suitable objects to play with and chew.
- Ensure dogs can rest undisturbed when they want to.
- Provide dogs with regular opportunities for exercise and play.
- Know the behaviour of dogs when they are fit and healthy. If you become aware of changes in behaviour, seek veterinary advice as the dog may be distressed, bored, ill, or injured.
- Use positive reward-based training and avoid harsh, potentially painful, or frightening training methods.

e) Need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury, and disease.

- Take precautions to keep dogs safe from injury, check them regularly and watch for signs of injury, disease or illness, or changes in behaviour.
- Check dogs' coats regularly, and groom dogs if necessary.
- If dogs are kept outside, clean up regularly to avoid disease transmission.
- It is important dogs are only given medicines authorised for dogs or that have been specifically prescribed or advised by your vet for a dog.
- Dogs are required to wear a collar and identity tag when in public. Collars should be of the correct size and fit, not causing any pain or discomfort.
- Microchip databases should be kept up to date with any changes in the contact details of a dog's registered keeper.

[Animal Welfare Visiting Scheme \(cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk\)](http://cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk)

[Complaints and Reviews \(cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk\)](http://cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk)

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**Police & Crime
Commissioner**
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE



**INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS SCHEME
ANNUAL REPORT
2023 – 2024**



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Foreword by Jonathan Ash-Edwards, Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire



Welcome to the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report for 2023-24. This report provides a summary of the work undertaken by the Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) during the final year of the previous Police and Crime Commissioners term.

I was elected as the new PCC on 4 May 2024 and formally took office on 9 May 2024.

This report covers the work undertaken by the ICVs over the last year of David Lloyd's service as the PCC for Hertfordshire. I am grateful for all he has done over the last 12 years to keep our communities safe which this area of scrutiny contributes to.

This report reviews the important work undertaken by a dedicated team of volunteers between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, highlighting both positive and negative issues from which appropriate learning and improvements can and have been made.

I look forward to learning more about the important work of the scheme during my first year in office.

I would like to take this opportunity to place on record my thanks to the officers, staff and volunteers of Hertfordshire Police and the Hertfordshire OPCC for their work during this past year ensuring that there is scrutiny and transparency over how the welfare and rights of detainees are maintained when in police custody. I look forward to working with you all over my first term in office.

Jonathan Ash-Edwards
Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner

Foreword by the Chief Inspector of Hertfordshire Constabulary's Custody Units



Having served as a constable in custody, a Custody Sergeant and a PACE Inspector I am acutely aware of the centrality of this role to policing and the significant risk that it carries.

However, I am also very mindful of how the operation of custody can impact upon a person's sense of dignity and how this, along with being treated with respect, can influence a person's sense of trust and confidence in policing.

Many of those who are brought into our custody facilities are vulnerable, many feel marginalised, many are fearful. My firm intention is that Hertfordshire will continue to deliver the highest levels of customer service to those we have a duty to look after and to care for whilst in detention.

Across the previous 2 years much has been done to improve our service delivery, to set challenging performance targets and to consistently meet them. I am, therefore, delighted to be working in such an outstanding unit.

I am also a passionate supporter and strong advocate of the Independent Custody Visitors Scheme. This scheme, along with its invaluable cohort of volunteers, provides a robust and reassuring programme of work which helps to ensure that our customer service provision, across both of Hertfordshire's custody facilities, excels in all areas.

In closing I would like to express my sincerest thanks to all those who volunteer for this scheme. My position is clear, your role and the work that you do is absolutely vital. Thank you for all that you do.

**Paul Mitson,
Chief Inspector,
Head of Hertfordshire Custody**

Overview of the Scheme

Under the Police Reform Act 2002, all police force areas are required to have a custody visiting scheme. The scheme's independent checks give the public reassurance that detainees are being treated fairly, that their legal rights and entitlements¹ are given, as well as checking their welfare and dignity are being maintained. Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) also review the custody suites for issues around cleanliness and maintenance. The scheme also provides assurances to detainees at a time when they may be feeling vulnerable or confused.

Following the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act (2011), the PCC assumed responsibility for the operation of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in Hertfordshire. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) manages and supports the smooth running of the scheme including the day-to-day enquiries, recruitment of the volunteers and improvements and development to the scheme.

ICVs are unpaid volunteers who live, work or study in Hertfordshire – at the end of March 2024 we had 29 ICVs compared to 31 last year. Three new ICVs have recently been recruited but were not in post during the reporting period and 2 ICVs have stood down. Due to the introduction of the fixed term tenure policy recruitment will recommence over the coming year to replace those reaching the end of their tenure. This recruitment will also make renewed efforts to attract volunteers from diverse backgrounds to better reflect the communities the scheme serves.

In ordinary times all visits are unannounced and can take place at any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The ICVs are trained to introduce themselves to detainees in custody and ask questions that ensures their treatment is fair and that they have access to their rights and entitlements. At the beginning of each visit, ICVs are told how many detainees are in custody at the suite being visited. The detainees are then introduced to the ICVs and, subject to their consent and availability a visit is undertaken.

ICVs complete a report form summarising their visit to each individual detainee. This is then forwarded to the scheme manager at the OPCC, with a hard copy retained by custody staff. Concerns raised by ICVs are reported to the Custody Inspector or escorting officer at the time of the visit, and then submitted to the scheme manager for review. The scheme manager highlights any concerns with the Custody Chief Inspector via email, telephone, or during regular meetings, depending on the urgency. The ICVs can also raise general matters arising from visits at their regular half yearly meetings with the OPCC.

The position of an ICV is an unpaid, voluntary role. All ICVs are encouraged to regularly complete an expense form to allow any costs associated with visits to be reimbursed by the Commissioner. The Commissioner also incurs other related costs for running the scheme

¹ An extensive list of these legal rights are provided under the section Rights of Detainees

including, but not limited to OPCC staff time, ICV training, printing, some limited catering for panel meetings, conference booking fees, and OPCC membership of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA). Over the year, training has been carried out online so no catering has been required for in-person meetings, two ICVs attended the ICVA National Conference in May 2023 at a cost of £100+VAT per person and OPCC Membership of ICVA was renewed at a cost of £1000+VAT. ICV Expenses claims have totalled £1,675.

Nationally, the Independent Custody Visitor Association² leads, supports and represents PCCs and police forces with regards to the Independent Custody Visiting schemes. The OPCC has developed a good relationship with ICVA and other scheme managers over several years. This has enabled the OPCC to ensure the scheme's aims and management are effective and they are kept informed of legislative changes and reforms.

Quality Assurance Framework

The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) was introduced by the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) in April 2018. It enables schemes to reflect on how they comply with the Code of Practice and the legislation which underpins custody visiting. The QAF seeks to encourage schemes to celebrate areas of strength and achievement, promote custody visiting, drive performance and increase sharing of good practice.

In November 2023, Hertfordshire was presented with the Silver Award therefore maintaining the standards achieved in the previous assessment. It is the aim to look at ways to improve diversity among volunteers. Not just diversity in terms of protected characteristics but also diversity of thought, bringing different perspectives to the scrutiny so the scheme better represents the communities it serves which is a requirement of the higher awards.

Custody Chief Inspector

In March 2024, Chief Inspector Paul Mitson was appointed as Chief Inspector for Custody. We are forging the same working relationship and lines of reporting that we had with previous Chief Inspectors; this is so the quality of the scheme remains consistent, and issues raised from the ICV visits can be addressed promptly.

² [Home Page of ICVA \(The Independent Custody Visitors Association\)](#)

Key Findings (1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024)

Number of Visits

Over twelve-months, 12,280 detainees passed through both custody suites (6,563 through Hatfield and 5,717 through Stevenage). This compares to a total of 12,255 detainees in 2022/2023, an increase of 0.2%. This suggests no substantial change in demand during 23/24 which is more closely aligned with a stable level of recorded crime. Overall ICVs visited 5.3% of those detainees who were booked in³, an increase on the previous year (4.7%). A figure that can be attributed to the higher number of visits carried out over the year.

Figure 1 shows that in 2023/24, ICVs undertook 113 custody visits, speaking to or observing a total of 649 detainees from a possible 762 who were available for a visit. Due to our recruitment effort and improved volunteer engagement, this allowed us to conduct 3 visits per week on more occasions, increasing visits by 94 on the previous year.

Figure 1: Breakdown of the visits for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

Custody Suite Visited	No. of visits undertaken	No. of detained persons held	No. of detainees available to visit	No. of detained persons visited	% of detainees visited (of those available)
Hatfield	61	490	442	380	86%
Stevenage	52	356	320	269	84%
TOTAL	113	810	762	649	85%

It should be noted that the number of detainees held at the time of ICV visits was 11% lower than in the previous year. While the number of visits increased, as illustrated in Figure 2, the percentage of detainees spoken to or observed remained constant at 85%. Whilst we expected this percentage to increase in 23/24, we identified an unusually high refusal rate which reached 40.5% in September and 32.6% in October – above the $\leq 15\%$ local average.

Declined Visits

Detainees who do not consent to a visit equates to 15% (n=113) of the cohort (see Figure 1). This is a slight increase on the previous figure of 14.5% and still comparatively high compared to other forces; the refusal rate elsewhere is between 7% and 16%⁴. There are several

³ Not all persons who are brought to custody are booked as the Custody Sergeant must determine whether the weight of evidence is sufficient or whether there is a case for an alternative intervention. For example, a detainee may require a mental health referral, or when a juvenile risks being detained overnight which would be a breach of policy. In the latter situation, alternative provisions and accommodation would be sought.

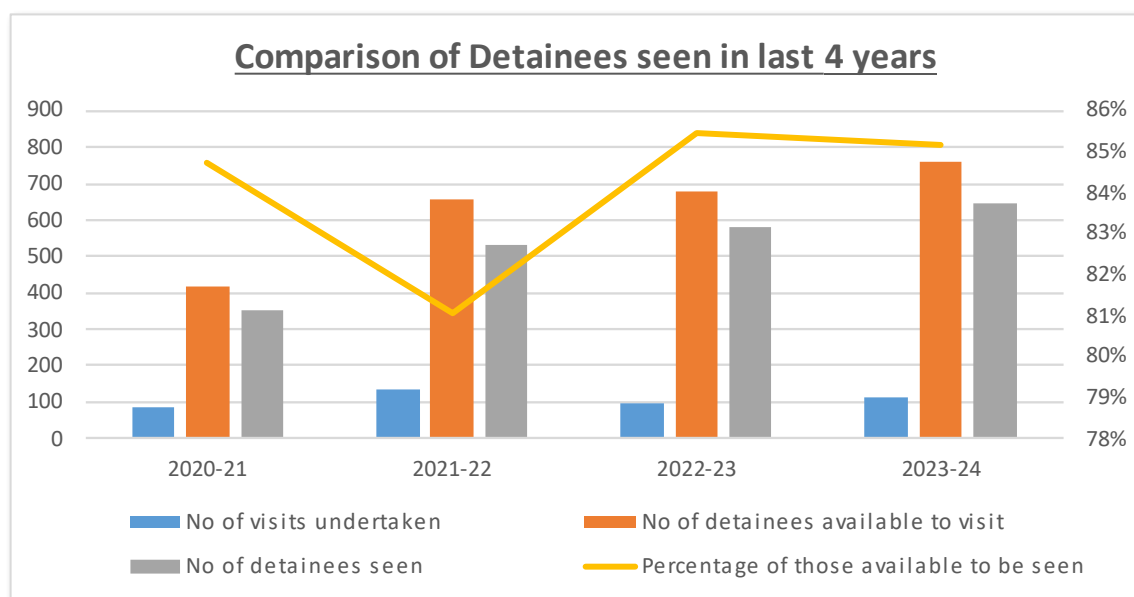
⁴ Taken from annual reports and direct enquiries with other forces.

reasons why ICVs are unable speak to detainees, including detainees being asleep, intoxicated or deemed too violent by custody staff. Detainees may also be unavailable if they are being interviewed, they may be in Court, with a health care professional or providing a DNA sample.

Understanding the reason(s) for our high refusal rate has been the subject of scrutiny and engagement with ICVs. Volunteers suggested that the way in which custody staff were introducing them to detainees was open to negative responses and therefore a refusal. Work has been undertaken in partnership with ICVA to produce standardised guidance on how ICVs should be introduced, encouraging the use of positive phrases and interaction. All custody staff were briefed on the guidance in March 2024, with the same advice rolled out nationally to assist other schemes.

In the coming year we will continue monitoring refusal data to determine the impact of the described change. As detainees do not have to give a reason for refusing a visit it is difficult to identify improvements, but we hope the changes made to the wording and approach to detainees will make a difference.

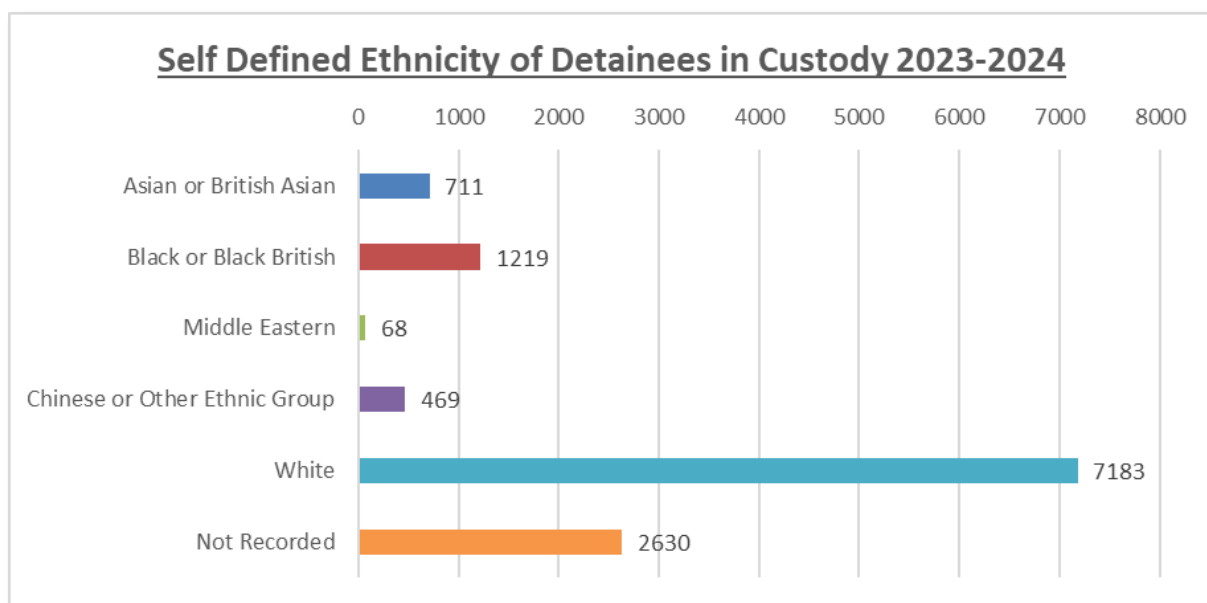
Figure 2: Comparison of detainees seen between 2020/21 and 2023/24



Detainee Data

Figure 3 shows that the proportion of 'Not Recorded' self-defined ethnicity has once again decreased on the previous year and now accounts for 21% of records, down from 22%. While this is not a mandatory field on the custody record, the expectation is that staff complete this field. Monthly reports are reviewed by the Custody Chief Inspector to identify non-compliance so that Inspectors can address these issues their teams directly.

Figure 3: Self-Defined Ethnicity of those passing through custody 2022-2023



Profile of the Independent Custody Visitors

At the end of 2023/24 there were 29 ICVs supporting the scheme who live in Hertfordshire. This is a decrease of 2 on the previous year, however three more volunteers will be inducted at the start of the 2024/25. While short of our target of retaining around 40 volunteers the level of engagement and commitment among the existing cohort of volunteers is high, which means the scheme operates well.

ICVs are asked to fill in a voluntary information disclosure agreement. This year 100% have declared their age and gender and 72% disclosed their ethnicity. From the data available 48% of volunteers are male, 52% are female, and the majority of volunteers are white (see Figures 4⁵ and 5⁶). Whilst the recent recruitment campaign targeted those from a wider ethnic background, further work is needed to improve the ethnic representation among ICVs.

⁵ According to the Office for National Statistics 2021 population denominators, Hertfordshire's population demographics shows ethnicity as: White 81.8%, Asian/Asian British 8.6%, Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British 3.7%, Mixed multiple ethnic group 3.8%, and other 2.1%. This information can be found at:

https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/census_2021/report?compare=E10000015#section_5

⁶ According to the Office for National Statistics 2021 Census the comparable age range in Hertfordshire was represented by 11% aged 20-29, 21% aged 30-44, 21% aged 45-59, 6% aged 60-64, 9% aged 65-74 and 6% aged 75-84.

Figure 4: Ethnicity profile of the Independent Custody Visitors

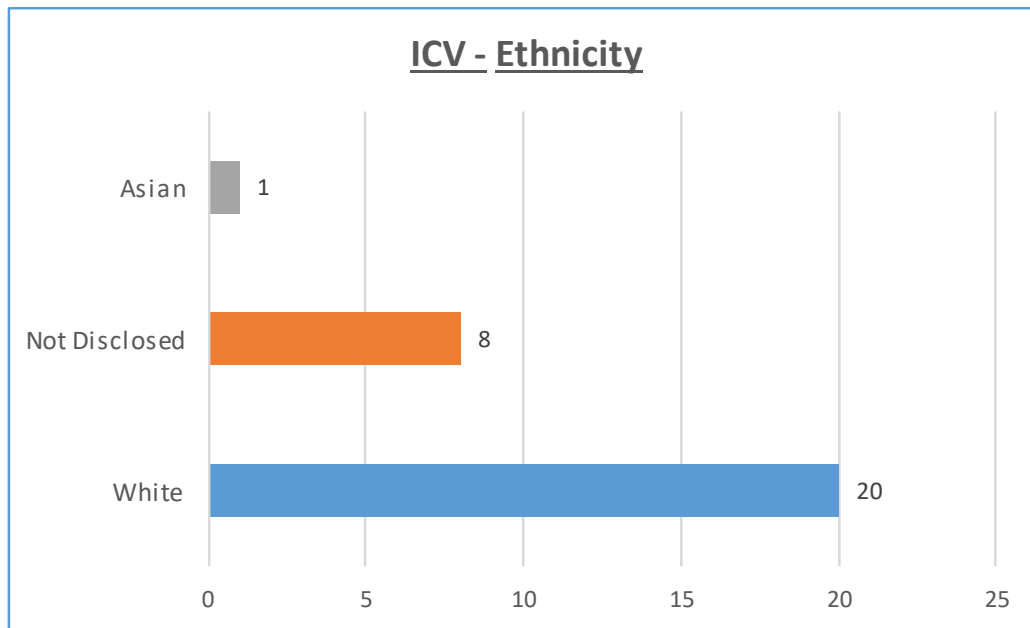
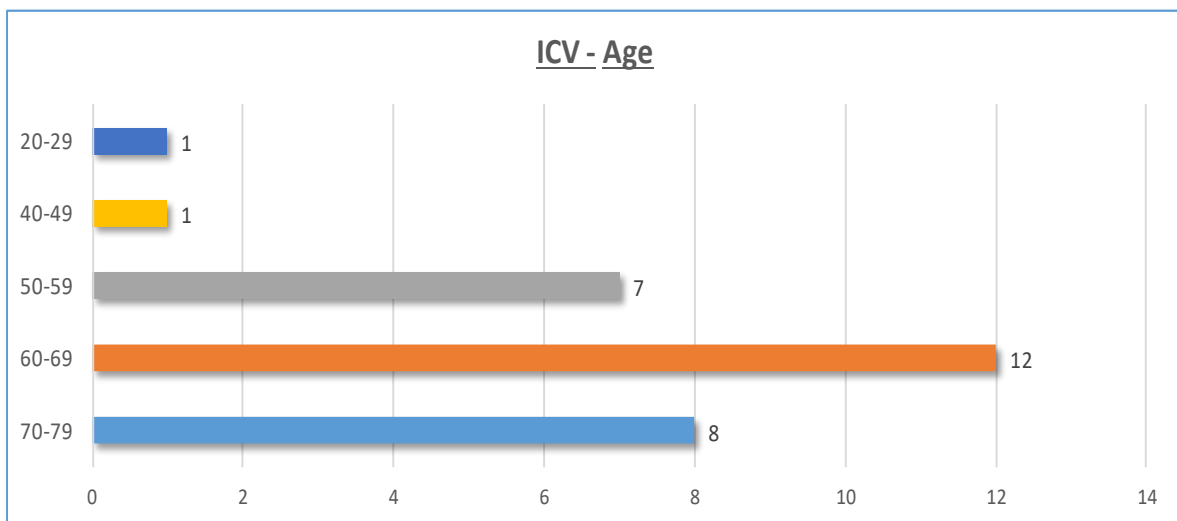


Figure 5: Age profile of the Independent Custody Visitors



Matters arising from custody visits

ICVs have been making at least one visit to each custody suite each week. The visits take place over a 24-hour period and meets the minimum statutory requirement. We aim to undertake a total of three visits per week where availability allows, but with the cohort currently available and accommodating the volunteers' own availability, this has not been consistently possible in the reporting year.

During 2023/24 of the 649 detainees visited, issues were noted from 27 (4.2%) detainees compared to 10 (1.7%) in the previous year. In total 36 issues⁷ raised by detainees were reviewed and 18 raised by ICVs. Positively, 96% of detainees did not raise any issues regarding their welfare whilst in custody, this is compared with 98% over the previous reporting period. The reason for this increase can be primarily explained by issues with healthcare coverage reported by both detainees and ICVs which we will address. Seventeen (2.6%) detainees made positive comments about their detention; comments focus on considerate treatment by custody staff.

All feedback is discussed in monthly meetings between the scheme manager and the Custody Chief Inspector. The Chief Inspector will then pass on and discuss with the Police Inspectors areas of required improvement, learning and training issues. Of the issues raised by detainees, the majority relate to the Rights of Detainee. Twenty-three individual issues were raised compared to 11 in the previous year. The main rights issues recorded this year include access to medical help (see Figure 7).

Of the 20 detainees who raised these issues, 60% were White British; 10% Any Other White, White and Black Caribbean, Any Other Asian and Any Other Ethnic Group were 5% each, 10% had Refused or Not States their Ethnicity and in 5% of cases Ethnicity had not been recorded by the ICVs. The proportions remain similar to the figures for 2022-23 where 66% were White British, 17% Any Other Mixed and 17% not stated.

Given the number of reported issues is very low and ethnicity is not recorded in every instance it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about bias relating to ethnicity. Figure 6 shows the breakdown of reported issues by ethnicity.

⁷ More than one issue may have been reported by each detainee or may have been expressed by an ICV and exclude the positive comments

Figure 6: Rights of Detainee by self-defined ethnicity

	Rights of Detainee	Vulnerable Detainees	Access to Amenities	Services Available	Cleaning	Maintenance	Food Drink Reading	Detention Issues PACE	ICV Staff Issues	Positive Feedback
White British	13%	3%				1%		2%		10%
White Irish										
Any Other White	2%				1%					
White and Black Caribbean	1%									
White and Black African										
Mixed White and Asian										
Any Other Mixed										
Asian/British Indian										
Asian British Pakistani										
Asian/British Bangladesh										
Any Other Asian	1%							1%		1%
Black/British Caribbean		1%								
Black/British African										1%
Any Other Black										
Chinese										
Any Other Ethnic Group	1%									1%
Refused/Not stated	2%						1%			4%
Not Recorded by ICV	4%			13%	3%	9%			19%	4%

Categories of issues raised by ICVs

1. Rights of Detainee

Rights of the Detainee are broken down into 13 sub-categories and detailed in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Sub-categories of issues relating to the Rights of Detainee

Rights of Detainee	Number of Issues raised	% of total	Number of Valid Issues/ Number of Not Valid Issues
Access to medical help	12	52%	1/11
Not given rights	4	17%	1/3
Access to food	4	17%	1/3
Phone Call	2	9%	1/1
Someone informed of their location	1	4%	1/0
Access to free legal advice	0	0%	
Privacy while receiving legal advice	0	0%	
Access to "Codes of Practice"	0	0%	
Can see written notice of rights	0	0%	
Access to drink	0	0%	
Access to interpreter/language cards	0	0%	
Access to complaints procedure	0	0%	
Contact Embassy	0	0%	
Total issues noted	23		

The highest reported area of concern is 'access to medical help' and by a significant margin. Of the twelve issues raised, it was verified that in all but one case the detainees had been offered, but refused medical assistance initially and subsequently requested it. Such requests were subsequently arranged or were pending authorisation so that staff could dispense medication.

In one specific case where learning was identified, a detainee had been waiting for their medication. ICVs checked the custody record to find at 6:11am no medical assistance was noted, but this failed to check whether medication was needed. At 6:45am (on handover) it was recorded that officers were bringing medication from home. Custody was chasing and the medication eventually arrived at 10:15am, taking 4 hours to receive. In this case, while appropriate steps had been taken there was a significant delay which could have led to more serious repercussions. The importance of getting medication to detainees promptly has been reiterated because, in this case, onsite medics would not have been able to prescribe the specific medication required.

Of the four rights issues, two detainees could not remember if they had been given their rights. A custody record check showed they had but the rights were reissued in response to the ICVs raising this. In the other two cases the detainees had been intoxicated, one had been given rights twice and the other was too intoxicated when booking in to understand. In both cases there had been a delay with rights reissued when both detainees were more capable of understanding.

Of the issues regarding access to food, three of these were raised by the ICVs themselves. One in respect to Vegan meals, of which there should normally be an option available, two where there were extremely low supply of meals and no sandwiches at all, and one where the detainee claimed they had not been offered any food or drink. The ICVs checked the custody record which showed both food and drink had been offered but had been declined and was again declined during the visit. It should be noted that while there were instances where sandwiches were out of stock there was always a supply of ready meals. The sandwich option is an alternative to ready meals but is not guaranteed. There were no instances where there were no meal options at all.

Of the issues regarding phone calls, the officer stated that for one person, and due to the nature of the investigation they were unable to contact anyone. For the other, despite initially saying to the ICVs they had not been allowed to make a call, the request was followed up by the ICVs and a call was facilitated. This ties in with a further report whereby the detainee wished to inform his wife of his whereabouts. A call had not been facilitated due the wife being overseas which necessitated an international call. Whilst international calls are not made, officers subsequently attempted to identify a friend in the UK who could pass on a message to the detainee's wife.

2. ICV Staff Issues

This was the second highest reported category with 18 issues highlighted. This is a general category for ICVs to highlight issues they witness or encounter in the custody suite or any general issues that do not fit into other categories. Four of these relate to long delays in ICVs gaining entry to the suite or starting the visit. This was either due to the suite being exceptionally busy and short staffed, ICT issues delaying access, or problems printing the whiteboard list that ICVs are presented with on entry (this provides details of who is in custody). It should be noted that the delays mentioned do not refer to the time spent booking in prisoners. At present 74% of prisoners at Hatfield and 67% at Stevenage wait less than 30 minutes to be booked in at custody suites.

At all times ICVs were kept informed of the situation and guidance has been issued to the ICVs about how to access the whiteboard which they can pass on to custody officers if needed. ICT issues are raised regularly by the scheme administrator and there is frequent maintenance of the system which we hope will begin to resolve these issues. The issue of staffing levels was

reported on two specific occasions but also as a reason for the some of the delayed entry cases. This was acknowledged when raised with the Chief Inspector he explained that more staff would be recruited to custody in September and October 2023. Since then, access difficulties have not been highlighted as an area of concern.

The most significant issue highlighted was over the provision of onsite healthcare. On 12 visits the ICVs specifically commented on the lack of cover either at certain times of the day or for extended periods. These issues were regularly reported to the Chief Inspector. Senior Constabulary staff had also been monitoring this provision which resulted in a change to the service supplier at the end of the reporting year. While there has been a handover period and it is too soon to assess what improvement this change might bring about, it is noted that the ICVs are already reporting better coverage. This will continue to be monitored.

3. Cleanliness & Maintenance

Cleanliness and maintenance issues were noted on a total of fourteen occasions, five of these related to concerns about CCTV not working in all areas. There was a known fault that had developed due to the age of the CCTV system, which was waiting on authorisation for work to begin on its replacement. At no point was there any risk to either staff or detainees.

Other issues related to cleanliness around air conditioning units, the exercise yard and damage to individual cells. All issues had been reported by custody staff and were waiting to be addressed. Overall, the ICVs regularly comment on how clean and well-kept all areas of custody are.

4. Vulnerable Detainees⁸

In the reporting year, the ICVs identified four issues of concern two relating to a 14 and 17-year-old juvenile being kept in custody overnight. There are robust processes in place that aim to prevent this from happening which were positively commented upon during the most recent HMICFRS inspection⁹. In this instance one was held due to being a high risk to the public and likely to reoffend having been arrested for a similar offence two days before. The other was deemed to be a high flight risk. The ICVs were satisfied that the assessments were reasonable, and both detainees commented that they had been well looked after.

Two people were noted to being held under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983. One a 17-year-old juvenile who was being held and referred to hospital under the Mental Health Act. ICVs commented that the staff were clearly solicitous for her welfare. The other was a 66-year-old male who was being held due to suicidal tendencies and was waiting to be taken to a more appropriate Mental Health Unit.

⁸ For a definition of vulnerability, see Appendix 1.

5. Detention Issues

Three issues were noted relating to detention and detainees being held for over 24 hours. One had been in hospital hence the lengthy detention but stated they had been treated fairly. Another was subject to immigration issues and was waiting to be collected for deportation, but officers had yet to arrive. In the third instance there was a delay in finding an appropriate adult resulting in an extended detention. This had been subject to a Superintendent review and had an extension authorised.

No issues were noted by the ICVs under any of the other reporting categories during the 2023-24 reporting period.

While the number of issues reported is higher than in the previous year, many of these are due to issues with healthcare provision, which the appointment of a new supplier is expected to address. Overall, the figures demonstrate how the staff and processes in place are maintaining the welfare, dignity and needs of the detainees.

6. Positive Feedback

ICVs recorded several positive comments by detainees regarding their welfare in custody. Of the 21 noteworthy positive comments, 17 were from detainees and 4 from the ICVs. All detainees chose to comment specifically about their welfare saying they had been well treated and that their dignity had been maintained. Comments such as; “well looked after, nicest ever been”, “staff have been amazing, well respectful”, “treated like a human being”, “been treated with dignity and respect” and “Hatfield is one of the best stations” are of particular note.

Once again ICVs also noted that police staff were helpful and professional when dealing with detainees and themselves. This is commented on for almost every visit, the comments highlighted were where the ICVs noted a particularly good interaction, one comment being “Excellent manner with detainees”, “Good rapport with detainees”, another “Excellent response to any actions required”.

Areas of focus for the year ahead (2024/2025)

Recruitment

Recruitment will continue with a focus on targeting a wider age and ethnic demographic, particularly as some volunteers reach the end of their tenure period in the coming year. With the success of using Instagram as a new social media outlet in the last campaign the OPCC will seek to engage with a communications company to explore other social media campaign opportunities to target under-represented groups.

Additionally, work has been undertaken to explore other established online volunteering portals which already reach an extensive base of potential volunteers; therefore, we hope to expand our advertising opportunities in the coming year.

IT Systems

The Constabulary's intelligence and case management system, Athena, provides ICVs with a snapshot of the detainees in custody when they arrive to undertake their visit. There are still occasional outages causing timeliness issues with obtaining the data, resulting in delays for ICVs. This continues to be monitored as updates are made to the system.

The OPCC is working to understand how other forces use electronic reporting for their ICVs. There has been progress in other areas, and we will be looking at these to determine if any are suitable for implementation in Hertfordshire. Electronic reporting will make sure data is captured consistently, ensure all sections of the form are completed, take away the need for staff to scan and email the forms and allow for more secure processing and data analysis.

The OPCC will also be rolling out a new system for the ICVs to book their visits. This will be an online shared calendar which they can log into, see when other visits are happening to avoid clashes and book the visit directly without having to check with the scheme manager as to whether their preferred day and time is available. This will speed up and simplify the booking process, especially when the scheme manager is unavailable.

Data Quality

The Constabulary continue to review the data they record about detainees. Whilst the recording of self-defined ethnicity has improved in the last year, with fewer instances when it is not recorded, custody staff are being reminded to always record this information or mark it as "not stated". In parallel, the OPCC will continue to monitor and raise issues with Chief Officers to improve systems and data capture.

Quality Assurance Framework

It is expected, but not confirmed, that ICVA will launch the next assessment in Spring 2025 and return to a proposed two-year cycle thereafter. The work carried out to achieve the Silver Award has identified areas to improve and consolidate, in particular with relation to increasing the diversity among volunteers. Working towards these improvements prior to 2025 will lay the groundwork for a potential Gold standard in the next assessment period.

Anti-Rip Clothing Scrutiny

In April 2023, a new scrutiny panel was established to review the use of anti-rip or safety clothing in custody – this was in response to recommendations in the most recent HMICFRS Inspection of Custody⁹. The panel is made up of Independent Custody Visitors and representatives from the Constabulary which has met three times between April 2023 to March 2024 to review incidents and ensure the use of the clothing is justified and proportionate.

Using feedback from these reviews the Constabulary has introduced changes to reduce the use of this clothing. This has resulted in only one recorded use between January and March 2024.

ICVA

ICVA monitor issues raised by scheme managers across the country to review and assess national trends and cascade details of legislative changes and reforms. The OPCC will continue monitoring any findings to inform the scheme's ongoing development.

⁹ [HMICFRS Report on an Unannounced Inspection Visit to Police Custody Suites in Hertfordshire June 2022](#)

Appendix 1

The term vulnerable¹⁰ applies to any person who, because of a mental health condition or mental disorder:

(i) may have difficulty understanding or communicating effectively about the full implications for them of any procedures and processes connected with:

- their arrest and detention; or (as the case may be)
- their voluntary attendance at a police station or their presence elsewhere, for the purpose of a voluntary interview; and
- the exercise of their rights and entitlements.

(ii) does not appear to understand the significance of what they are told, of questions they are asked or of their replies

(iii) appears to be particularly prone to:

- becoming confused and unclear about their position;
- providing unreliable, misleading or incriminating information without knowing or wishing to do so;
- accepting or acting on suggestions from others without consciously knowing or wishing to do so; or
- readily agreeing to suggestions or proposals without any protest or question.

¹⁰ Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Code C – Revised July 2018 section 1.13(d)

Interested in becoming an Independent Custody Visitor?

If you are interested in becoming an Independent Custody Visitor please contact:

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Administrator
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire
13 Vaughan Road
Harpenden
AL5 4GZ

Telephone: 01707 806100

Email: pccadmin@herts-pcc.gov.uk

For more information regarding the role of ICVs and that of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, please visit www.hertscommissioner.org

For more information on the role of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), please visit: www.icva.org.uk

We welcome applications from anyone who lives in Hertfordshire. The OPCC is particularly interested to hear from younger people and those from Black, Asian and all Ethnic communities.

Hertfordshire Independent Use of Force Scrutiny Panel Annual Report 2023/24



**Police & Crime
Commissioner**
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Chair's Foreword



I am privileged to present the 2023/24 Hertfordshire Independent Use of Force Scrutiny Panel annual report to you. I am also honoured to have been re-appointed as Chair for a second term covering the 2024/25 period.

We continue to have a strong panel with 29 members which enables us to split into two subgroups to increase the number of use of force body worn video incidents we scrutinise.

The diversity of panel members around age, ethnicity and lived experience continues to be an opportunity for improvement. There are activities planned to help address this such as a mock panel and wider more targeted communications. I'd encourage anyone reading this annual report to consider joining us or letting their friends and relatives know about the panel.

This year, I am pleased to say we have been able to increase the number of incidents we review and although this is a small percentage of the overall number of use of force incidents with targeted deep dives on specific themes, the panel remains confident that overall, use of force by Hertfordshire Constabulary is lawful, proportionate and justified. (Please see the data analysis reports below.)

When we do have concerns there is now a well-established feedback loop to ensure these are followed through with the officers concerned, any appropriate action is taken, and the panel is then told the outcomes to complete the feedback loop. This has worked well and there have been examples of positive changes in behaviour because of the work of the panel. This process is also used as a positive feedback loop where we see excellent work by officers. We understand this is received well by the officers concerned.

One area where we saw significant improvement is when we struggled at times to obtain a written statement from officers. Statements help us better understand the wider context of the use of force incident and not just rely on the video. This was recognised by Hertfordshire Constabulary and they amended their policy to ensure a statement is mandatory for all use of force incidents. Since January 2024 this had greatly improved our ability to obtain written statements to support our scrutiny work.

In other areas we have made good progress over the last 12 months, for example well attended training opportunities for panel members, reviewing use of force incidents in custody suites, and continuing deep dives into thematic areas. As a result, the latest His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) PEEL inspection report recognised that Hertfordshire has effective independent scrutiny panels.

The support and transparency by Hertfordshire Constabulary to the panel continues to be outstanding. We have an excellent working relationship where we trust each other and can be frank and honest with each other in all conversations. This is so important if we are to continue to see improvements in how the Police use force and further progress in public trust and legitimacy in the Police.

Finally, I would like to thank the panel and the staff of the OPCC for their dedication and hard work over the last 12 months and in particular the support they have given to me in performing my role as Chair.

Chris Cowdrey

Chair of the Hertfordshire Independent Use of Force Scrutiny Panel

Police and Crime Commissioner's Foreword



Effective scrutiny of use of police powers is vital and I am pleased, since being elected Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, to see the robust measures our county has in place to scrutinise what are necessary but ultimately coercive powers.

Opening up how Hertfordshire Constabulary uses force to independent scrutiny is important because transparency reinforces police legitimacy and protects the public's confidence in the police. Communities throughout our county should be reassured by the Panel's findings this year, which show that a vast majority (92%) of use of force incidents it scrutinised were entirely lawful, proportionate and justified.

We should also be encouraged by the fact the panel has an effective and well-established feedback loop with the Constabulary. This means that when the Panel does raise concerns, its work has a direct and positive impact on individual officer conduct and wider organisational learning which improves policing policy and practice. It is clear that the Constabulary value the work of the Panel and I have been impressed by the transparent and professional working relationship that they have established.

In what is its second annual report, I am pleased to see that the Panel has made such excellent progress in the breadth and depth of its scrutiny activity. The Panel has worked hard to increase the totality of use of force incidents it reviews through body worn video and officer statements, boosting the volume of incidents scrutinised by 22% compared to last year. It has also continued to widen its scrutiny remit, reviewing more use of force incidents via custody suite CCTV in line with HMICFRS' custody inspection recommendations.

The coming year promises to be another year of progress for the Panel as it continues to strengthen its already robust scrutiny function.

I would like to thank panel members for volunteering their time to the important work of the Use of Force Scrutiny Panel. I look forward to working with our Panel members to further enhance their scrutiny of officers' use of force in Hertfordshire and the vital support they provide to me in discharging my statutory duties.

Jonathan Ash-Edwards

Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire Constabulary's Foreword



As the Senior Officer responsible for the oversight of the Use of Police Powers, I am pleased to note another positive annual report from the Use of Force Scrutiny Panel. The work of the panel provides vital independent scrutiny and oversight of the Constabulary's use of our powers to use force, when necessary and legal, as we discharge our duties to prevent crime and protect the public.

Whilst the use of force is often necessary in fighting crime and keeping people safe, using any force is not without risk in terms of public confidence. Indeed, the misuse or disproportionate use of any power to use force can negatively impact on communities and policing legitimacy.

Whilst we have no targets in relation to the use of force and the range of force can span from simply restraining someone with handcuffs to the deployment of Armed Officers in the extreme, I am pleased to note that we continue to work to ensure we only use force when legal, proportionate and necessary. I am also pleased to note that the panel found this to be the case in 92% of cases they reviewed in the past year, noting a small reduction in the number of times force was used over the same period.

Finally, it is important to note that the work of the panel does not operate in a vacuum, indeed when the panel meets, we have in attendance supervisors and operational officers and a member of the training team whose presence allows the panel to ask questions to inform its decision-making. This also allows operational officers to see the work of the panel, feed back to their peers and inform and improve operational practice and training.

We are lucky to have the panel in place, acting as an independent 'critical friend' representing the communities of Hertfordshire and holding the Constabulary to account. I look forward to continuing this work with the panel in the coming year.

Chief Superintendent Dean Patient

Chair of Hertfordshire Constabulary's Police Powers Board

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key findings

- In Hertfordshire in 2023/24, a total of 12,719 use of force records were completed, accounting for 7,872 incidents.¹ On last year, this represents a decrease of 1.2% in the volume of use of force records completed and a 1.7% decrease in total incidents.
- The most common outcome in use of force incidents this year was arrest of the individual involved, accounting for 63% of use of force records.
- This year the Panel scrutinised 72 use of force incidents, averaging 12 per meeting. This exceeds its average last year which was just below 10 incidents per meeting. Over the course of the year, this is a 22% increase on last year in terms of total incidents scrutinised by the Panel.
- Of the 72 incidents assessed, the Panel graded 66 (92%) as Green, 4 (6%) as Amber and 2 (c.3%) as Red.²
- Those incidents graded as Green typically possessed the following attributes:
 - Use of force was clearly lawful, justified, and proportionate; evidenced through Body Worn Video (BWV) and corresponding statements.
 - Officers remained calm and controlled the situation well.
 - Clear written statements were produced with a convincing rationale for using force that matched what was viewed in the corresponding BWV.
 - Officers acted with the appropriate level of care and consideration for the individual and kept the safety of officers and members of the public in mind.
- For those incidents that were not graded as Green, the Panel identified some common themes:
 - The use of force was not considered proportionate in the circumstances or the method of force was inappropriate which escalated the situation.
 - The incident was unnecessarily escalated by inexperienced officers due to a lack of clear tactical communications.
 - Poor written statements in which the rationale and justification for using force is missing or unclear.
 - Use of bad language by officers which escalates rather than defuses tensions.

Key achievements

- The Panel has continued its scrutiny role through bi-monthly meetings, increasing the number of use of force incidents scrutinised this year on last.
- Panel members have provided invaluable support to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) in the ongoing implementation of the Health Check recommendations, an OPCC-commissioned review of the governance and operation

¹ A use of force record is completed by an officer when they use force. The total number of records completed differs from the total number of incidents because, for example, two or more officers may use force on the same individual during a single incident. Such a scenario would be recorded as one incident, but each officer who used force would be required to complete their own use of force record.

² The Panel uses a Red-Amber-Green (RAG) system to scrutinise and grade incidents. Please see Appendix B for further detail.

of its scrutiny panels. In parallel, the Panel has continued to adopt the Home Office's draft National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels to ensure that it meets or exceeds national best practice wherever possible. Progress made this year provides a strong foundation on which to continue enhancing the breadth and depth of the Panel's scrutiny over the course of the next year.

- In alignment with the Home Office draft National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels, Panel members have taken up a multitude of training opportunities throughout the year, including refresher training, observation of officer training, and 'Ride Alongs' with the Constabulary.
- In line with both the Health Check recommendations and draft National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels, Panel meetings have been hosted at different external locations across the county, helping to build positive working relationships with partner organisations and facilitate attendance and participation in meetings by Neighbourhood Policing Teams across Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs).
- Use of force in custody covering adults and children continues to be scrutinised at Panel meetings, in line with HMICFRS' custody inspection recommendations.
- The Panel has continued to enhance its use of data to identify deep-dive topics for detailed scrutiny.
- The Panel has successfully influenced and improved policing policy and procedure, notably around the Constabulary's Use of Force Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) so that officers must now create an MG11 (i.e. a statement) outlining the justification for their use of force. This change has had a positive impact on the Panel's ability to straightforwardly secure statements from officers and has also prompted improvements in the quality of written statements.

Recommendations for the year ahead (April 2024 – March 2025)

- Continue to implement the Health Check recommendations and adopt the Home Office's draft National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels to ensure that the Panel aligns with and where possible exceeds national best practice.
- Continue to increase the average number of use of force incidents scrutinised at meetings.
- Continue to increase the sample size of custody CCTV footage as a proportion of the Panel's wider scrutiny.
- Adopt a more data-influenced approach to scrutiny work, making more sophisticated use of PowerBI to understand trends and anomalies and identify issues requiring further investigation – and tracking progress over time. The Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel is adopting such an approach for its work around disproportionality and more widely, and the rich amount of data available to the Use of Force Scrutiny Panel means it can implement the same approach.
- Deliver a communications strategy spanning the OPCC's scrutiny panels to increase community awareness of and involvement in the panels' work.
- Find effective ways to deliver a more diverse Panel membership by ethnicity, age and those with lived experience of police activity.

- Continue to identify public venues for meetings to maximise opportunities for members of the public to observe the Panel’s work; and work to establish effective, practical hybrid meeting options to help attract and retain younger, more diverse panel members.
- Work with the OPCC’s Complaint Resolution Team (CRT) to understand how its rich data sets can be used to inform and advance areas of Panel scrutiny.

1. Introduction

This annual report summarises the work undertaken by the Hertfordshire Independent Use of Force Scrutiny Panel (hereafter referred to as ‘the Panel’) between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. It evaluates the Panel’s progression and development this year and sets out recommendations for the coming year that will further increase the breadth and impact of the Panel’s scrutiny.

The Panel’s assessments and feedback inform individual and organisational learning and development, and improvement in police policy and practice regarding ‘use of force’ powers. This supports efforts to improve transparency and enhance public confidence in the Constabulary’s lawful, ethical and proportionate use of force.

The purpose and remit of the Panel is to support the PCC to discharge their statutory duty and hold the Chief Constable to account by providing independent scrutiny and feedback on the appropriate, proportionate, and ethical use by officers of use of force powers within national and local statutory frameworks. The Panel also makes recommendations on the Constabulary’s procedures and practices. We continuously horizon scan and adopt best practice and guidance from the Government to ensure our scrutiny volunteers are asking the right questions and providing the PCC with the strongest possible support in his role to hold the Chief Constable to account.

To deliver on this purpose, the Panel meets on a bi-monthly basis to review the preceding two month’s Constabulary use of force activity. Therefore, this report relates to the Constabulary’s use of force activity from 1 March 2023 to 29 February 2024.

This report uses the most recent data available to the Constabulary on PowerBI. A glossary is included to explain some of the terminology used in the report.



Panel members at their meeting in March 2024

Become a Member of the Use of Force Scrutiny Panel!

We continue to recruit for new Members! As a Panel Member you would:

- **Attend and participate in Panel meetings.** Meetings are held bi-monthly for three hours and are currently held mostly in person, during the day, across the county. Our ambition is to make Panel Meetings as flexible and inclusive as possible, and we continue to develop optimum online and hybrid options.
- **Be offered training to support your scrutiny,** including the opportunity to go on a Ride Along with police officers.
- **Be paid travel expenses.** Whilst this is a voluntary role, the OPCC meets any reasonable travel expenses incurred by Panel members.

We welcome applications from anyone who lives, works or studies in Hertfordshire. The OPCC is particularly interested to hear from younger people and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

If you are interested in finding out more about becoming a Panel Member, please email Susan McNeill at the OPCC: susan.mcneill@herts-pcc.gov.uk

Profile of Hertfordshire

- Hertfordshire is a large county stretching from Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire to the north to the outskirts of London in the south. It borders Buckinghamshire to the west and Essex to the east.
- Hertfordshire has a population of 1,204,588. 28.2% of residents are from an ethnic minority compared to 26.5% in England as a whole.
- Urban areas make up around a third of Hertfordshire by area and account for around 89% of the population. There is no single dominant large urban centre. In total, there are 40 settlements with 4,000 or more residents in each.
- Hertfordshire Constabulary has Neighbourhood Policing Teams which operate in each of the ten Community Safety Partnerships. These represent the ten local district and borough councils: Dacorum, East Herts, North Herts, Welwyn Hatfield, Broxbourne, Hertsmere, Watford, Three Rivers, St Albans, and Stevenage.
- Hertfordshire has lower crime levels than the national average: 64.6 crimes per 1,000 residents compared to 82.2 in England (Feb 2023 – Jan 2024). However, levels of antisocial behaviour incidents are higher: 21.3 per 1,000 residents compared to 14.7 in England (Feb 2023 – Jan 2024).

See [HertsInsight](#) (ONS Census 2021 Data, ONS mid-2022 population estimates, April 2024) for references and more information.

2. Background

Independent scrutiny of the police's use of coercive powers sits at the heart of police legitimacy which is critical to maintaining the public's trust and confidence in the police. The Panel plays a vital part in preserving and enhancing that legitimacy in Hertfordshire by delivering independent scrutiny of use of force incidents.

What is Use of Force?

The law allows the police to use reasonable force, when necessary, in order to carry out their role of law enforcement. In England and Wales, the use of (reasonable) force is provided to police and any other person under Section 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967, which states: "A person may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances in the prevention of crime, or in effecting or assisting in the lawful arrest of offenders or suspected offenders or of persons unlawfully at large".

Methods of Force

The Panel only reviews use of force deployed by local policing teams in Hertfordshire. A use of force incident is defined as a situation in which a police officer uses any of the following force tactics:

- **Restraint Tactics:** Handcuffing (compliant or non-compliant), limb restraint, and ground restraint.
- **Unarmed Defence Tactics (UDT):** Distraction strikes with hands and feet; and pressure point and joint locks.
- **Use of other equipment:** Baton (including where it was drawn but not used), PAVA irritant spray (including where it was drawn but not used) and spit guard.
- **Less lethal weapons:** Conducted Energy Device (CED, e.g., TASER®), (including where it was drawn but not used)

The Panel's remit excludes firearms, dogs, or shield, which is scrutinised by the [Joint Protective Services \(JPS\) Use of Force Panel](#).

The Panel provides independent scrutiny and feedback on whether use of force was lawful, proportionate, and justified within national and local statutory frameworks (Common Law, Section 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967, Section 117 of PACE 1984, Section 76 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008, College of Policing's Authorised Policing Practice).

The Panel was established in 2018 and initially managed internally by Hertfordshire Constabulary. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Panel meetings were postponed for a period as body worn video (BWV) footage could not be streamed via Microsoft TEAMS due to data protection issues. In September 2021, the Panel was brought under the management of the OPCC.

The Panel today is well-established and continues to evolve and adapt its practices, always seeking new ways to strengthen the impact and depth of its scrutiny. It provides clear and transparent information for both Constabulary and community benefit and plays an

important part in enhancing public confidence in police performance. This was borne out in the most recent His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Peel Inspection, published in February 2023, which found that Hertfordshire has effective independent panels that scrutinise the Constabulary's use of force.³

3. Health Check

Significant progress has been made this year in implementing the recommendations made by the independent Health Check of the governance and operations of the Use of Force Scrutiny Panel (and Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel), undertaken on behalf of the OPCC by Att10tive Social Enterprise.⁴

The Health Check concluded that in Hertfordshire the foundations and framework are in place to provide effective scrutiny and oversight of police powers. It identified areas of good practice and made recommendations for further areas of development. Those areas of development have been progressed at pace, but there is still more to do and further progress will be a key priority for the year ahead.

In particular, there will be a resolute focus on raising community awareness of, and involvement in, the work of OPCC scrutiny panels and continuing efforts to broaden the diversity of the Panels' membership by age, ethnicity and lived experience of the criminal justice system. These objectives will be delivered by a coherent, unified communications strategy sitting across all the OPCC's scrutiny panels. The Panel recognises that improving diverse attendance and membership must go hand-in-hand with considering what format panel meetings take in future. Meetings held during the day in a formal classroom setting will not always appeal to younger people and those with different work commitments.

4. Panel Membership and Leadership

The Panel has benefitted from stable leadership during the reporting period. Chris Cowdrey was re-appointed as Chair for a second term in January 2024, which will run to January 2026. Jeffrey Burke continues to serve as one of two Vice Chairs. The second Vice Chair position is currently vacant and a new appointment will be made imminently.

As of April 2024, the Panel's total membership has remained stable at 29 members, all of whom live, work or study in Hertfordshire. Over the course of the year, nine members have retired from the Panel and nine new members have joined. The OPCC continues to advertise for and recruit new members on an ongoing basis.

In line with the Health Check recommendations, a coordinated approach to recruitment for the Use of Force and Stop and Search Panels was developed and delivered in the latter half of 2023. Whilst that campaign generated significant interest in the Panels and attracted new and valued members, it did not significantly shift the dial in terms of diversity of membership.

³ [PEEL 2021/22 – An inspection of Hertfordshire Constabulary - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/peel/2021-22-an-inspection-of-hertfordshire-constabulary-his-majestys-inspectorate-of-constabulary-and-fire-rescue-services/)

⁴ Att10tive Social Enterprise <https://att10tive.com/>

Addressing this point will be an absolute priority in the coming year across the OPCC's Scrutiny Panels. Delivering diversity through recruitment will be a key tenet of the communications strategy described in the section above. As a first step, the OPCC has developed a 'mock panel' model that will be delivered in colleges and educational settings to bring to life the scrutiny process for stop and search and use of force, engaging proactively and directly with young people from less well represented communities throughout the county.

It is the Panel's target to reflect the demographics within Hertfordshire and we will continue to pursue a recruitment strategy that delivers as far as possible a Panel membership which echoes the thriving diversity in our county.

The following table provides a breakdown of Panel membership by gender, age and ethnicity compared against Hertfordshire's 2021 Census data:

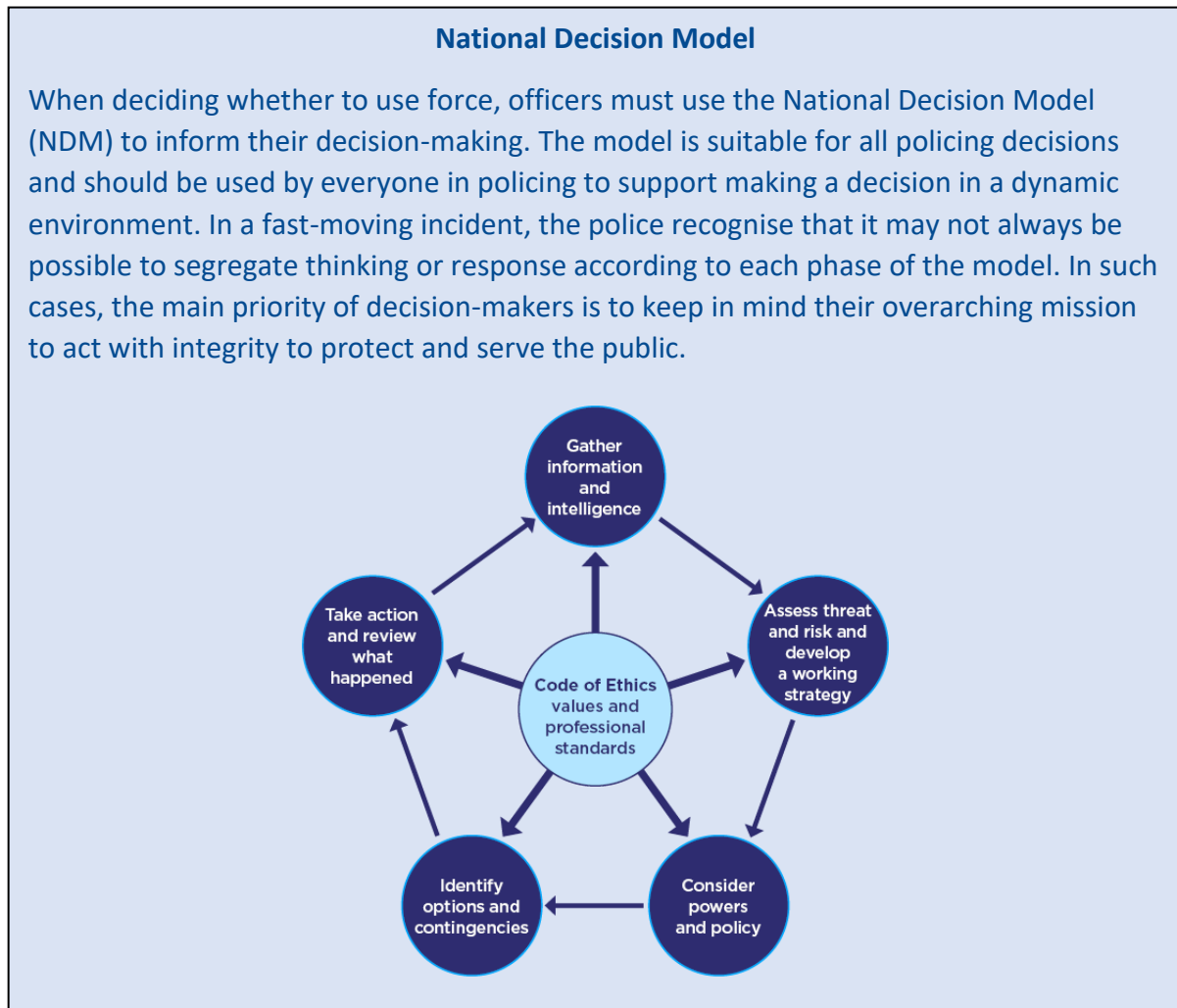
Category	Panel	2021 Census ⁵
Gender		
Female	51.7%	51%
Male	48.3%	49%
Age		
16 – 24	3.5%	9.4%
25 – 39	0%	19.9%
40 – 54	17.3%	21.3%
55 – 70	37.9%	17.2%
70+	31%	12.5%
Prefer not to say	10.3%	
Ethnicity		
White	89.7%	81.8%
Asian/Asian British	6.9%	8.6%
Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	3.4%	3.8%
Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African	0%	3.7%
Other Ethnic Group	0%	2.1%

5. Panel Training

We have continued to evolve and widen the training offer to Panel members this year, in alignment with the Home Office draft National Guidance on Community Scrutiny Panels. Upon joining the Panel, members undertake a mandatory training session with the OPCC and Constabulary's Personal Safety Team (PST) to understand the National Decision Model, tactical communications, and the legislative and policy context that frames use of force powers – and the Panel's role in scrutinising their use. This provides new members with a strong grounding in understanding how to critically challenge and scrutinise use of force incidents.

⁵ ONS Census 2021 Hertfordshire: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/areas/E10000015/>

When this training package is delivered to new members, it is also offered as a matter of course to all existing members as a refresher training opportunity. This helps maintain and further develop members' understanding of police powers and ability to deliver effective scrutiny.



Panel members are also encouraged at any point in their membership to participate in the Constabulary's Ride Along scheme, giving members the opportunity to join officers on patrol and experience daily policing first-hand to provide them with the operational context in which force is used across different scenarios. With the help of the Constabulary, the Ride Along application process for Panel members was streamlined this year, significantly reducing wait times between applying and participating in the scheme.

We continue to work with the Constabulary to identify opportunities for Panel members to attend and observe officer training, not just for use of force specifically but for relevant wider topics such as Bias training. In December 2023 and January 2024, members from all OPCC Scrutiny Panels had the opportunity to attend 'Impact of Bias' training being delivered to frontline officers in Neighbourhood Policing Teams. This gave members additional insight into the training officers receive around how bias training is being used to minimise the

impact of any assumptions, biases, or stereotyping and how that can impact decision-making in policing. Feedback from Panel members was extremely positive.



This year, a group of Panel members attended an event hosted by Joint Protective Services (JPS – a collaborative alliance between Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire covering armed policing, dogs, and roads policing) specifically arranged for members of scrutiny panels from across the three counties. The purpose of the event was to inform Panel members about the work of JPS and the specific methods of force for which it is responsible that sit outside of the remit of the OPCC’s Use of Force Scrutiny Panel. (A distinct scrutiny panel assesses use of force by JPS units).

In line with the Health Check recommendations and Home Office best practice, the OPCC continues to explore how we can continue to improve and widen the training offer to Panel members to give them the best possible grounding to fulfil their scrutiny role effectively. This includes exploring what potential value might be added by external training providers to supplement what is already delivered in-house by the OPCC and Constabulary.

6. Meetings

Terms of Reference (ToR) are in place to guide the work of the Panel and these are reviewed on an annual basis. As part of the implementation of the Health Check recommendations, the Panel’s ToRs were reviewed and updated in 2023 to ensure absolute transparency

around the remit, membership, governance, and types of scrutiny activity undertaken by the Panel. The revised ToR are published on the OPCC website.⁶

A Superintendent, Chief Inspector, Inspector or Sergeant (or combination thereof) from Hertfordshire Constabulary's Operational Strategy, Performance and Transformation Department (OST) attends all meetings so that operationally specific questions can be asked directly by members. In addition, a member from the Constabulary's Personal Safety Team, which delivers all police officer use of force training, also attends every meeting to advise on use of force tactics. When CSP deep-dives are conducted by the Panel, the relevant Chief Inspector is invited to attend and observe.

As the Panel continues to conduct meetings at different venues across the county, Sergeants and Police Constables from Neighbourhood Policing Teams are invited to attend meetings as a matter of course to observe and understand the work of the Panel. Feedback from attending officers continues to be extremely positive.

The Panel has an established meeting format which maximises time dedicated to scrutiny whilst permitting the flexibility to address new and relevant issues as they arise. Meetings consist of standing agenda items (welcome, apologies, minutes, and actions) with the bulk of meeting time devoted to scrutiny. Members break into two groups to undertake scrutiny, to increase the totality of incidents assessed by the Panel. Incidents for the meeting are dip-sampled randomly by the Chair, who can select a range of methods of force depending on the theme of the meeting. Typically, twenty incidents are selected for a meeting, split randomly between the two groups. At the end of each meeting, the two groups summarise their feedback, gradings and specific issues and themes of note from their scrutiny.

The Panel uses a RAG (Red-Amber-Green) grading system to assess use of force incidents, with scores ranging from 1 to 7 (see Appendix B for the RAG grading system detailed in full). The RAG grading system enables Panel members to make measured assessments on whether force used is legal and proportionate, and on wider considerations around officer language, behaviour and regard to the safety of officers and members of the public.

The Panel grades each incident and completes written feedback forms which are shared via the Constabulary with individual officers. Feedback in turn informs individual and wider organisational learning and development. A comprehensive and well-established feedback loop is in place with the Constabulary. Where serious concerns are raised by the Panel, the Constabulary reports back at the subsequent meeting on the outcome of their feedback, whether positive or negative, and any agreed course of action for the officer involved, to complete the feedback loop.

⁶ [use-of-force-panel-terms-of-reference-2023-2024.pdf \(hertscommissioner.org\)](https://www.hertscommissioner.org/use-of-force-panel-terms-of-reference-2023-2024.pdf)

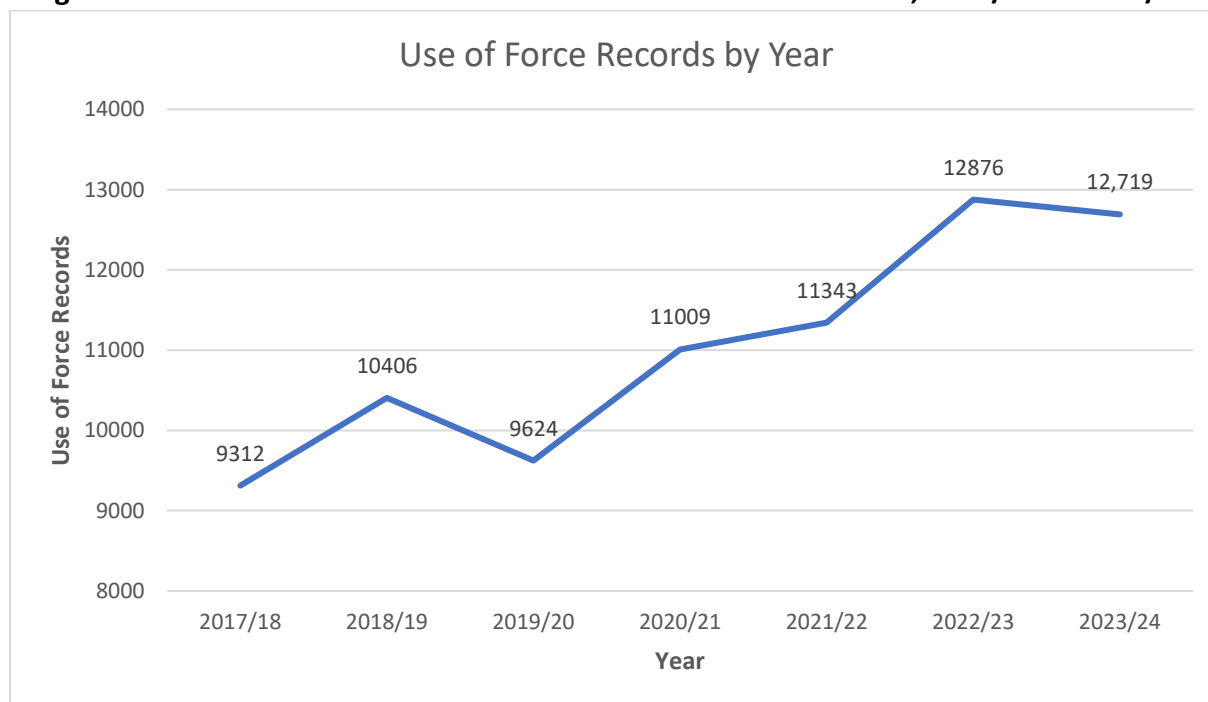
7. Key Findings

Use of Force in Hertfordshire

In Hertfordshire in 2023/24, a total of **12,719 use of force records** were completed, accounting for **7,872 incidents**.⁷ On last year, this represents a decrease of 1.2% in the volume of use of force records completed and a 1.7% decrease in total incidents. The latest available Home Office statistics (for 2022/23) indicate that Hertfordshire sits seventh out of eight in its Most Similar Force Group when it comes to total volume of use of force incidents.⁸

Prior to March 2022, Hertfordshire Constabulary used a platform called SNAP which did not have the capability to record the total count of use of force incidents. It is therefore not possible to compare incident totals beyond this year and last. Use of force incidents are now recorded on tuServ, which will enable that historical comparison to be made in future years. It is also mandatory for officers to enter an online use of force record via tuServ. This largely explains the fact that the total volume of use of force records (see **figure 1** for a year-by-year comparison) was markedly higher in 2022/23 and 2023/24 compared to previous years (i.e. tuServ data provides a more complete and accurate picture of use of force, as opposed to there necessarily being a dramatic increase in use of force by officers in the past two years).

Figure 1: Annual Volumes of Use of Force Records in Hertfordshire, 2017/18 to 2023/24



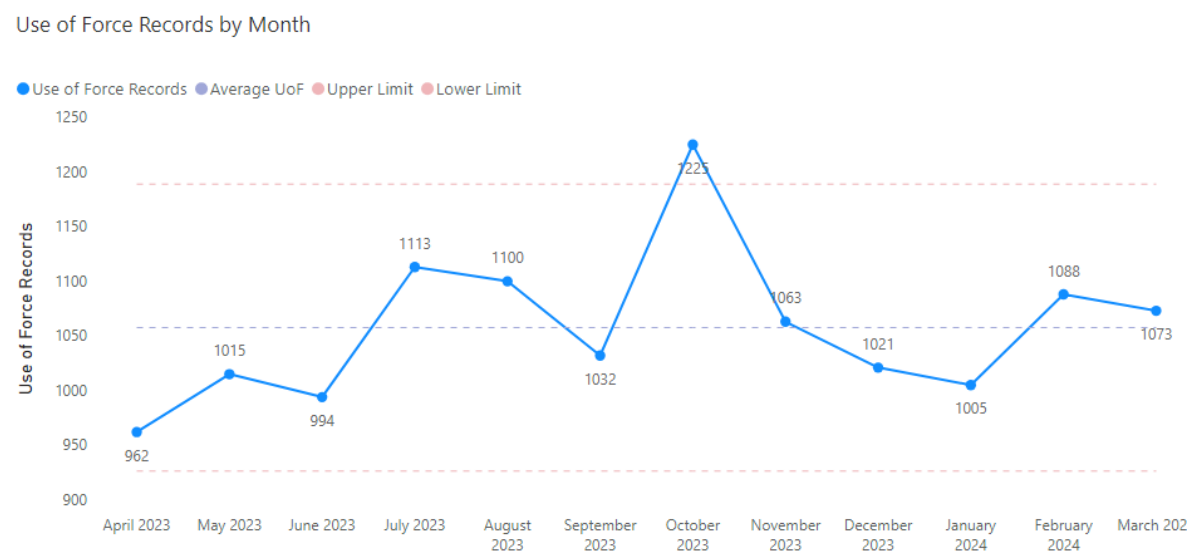
(source: PowerBI, accessed 2nd May 2024)

⁷ A use of force record is completed by an officer when they use force. The total number of records completed differs from the total number of incidents because, for example, two or more officers may use force on the same individual during a single incident. Such a scenario would be recorded as one incident, but each officer who used force would be required to complete their own use of force record.

⁸ [Police use of force statistics, England and Wales: April 2022 to March 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-use-of-force-statistics-england-and-wales-april-2022-to-march-2023)

Volumes of use of force records this year were relatively stable on a month-to-month basis, with a slight spike in total records (1225) recorded in October 2023 (see figure 2), with Halloween traditionally placing additional demands on frontline officers.

Figure 2: Monthly Volumes of Use of Force Records in Hertfordshire, April 2023 to March 2024



(source: PowerBI, accessed 2nd May 2024)

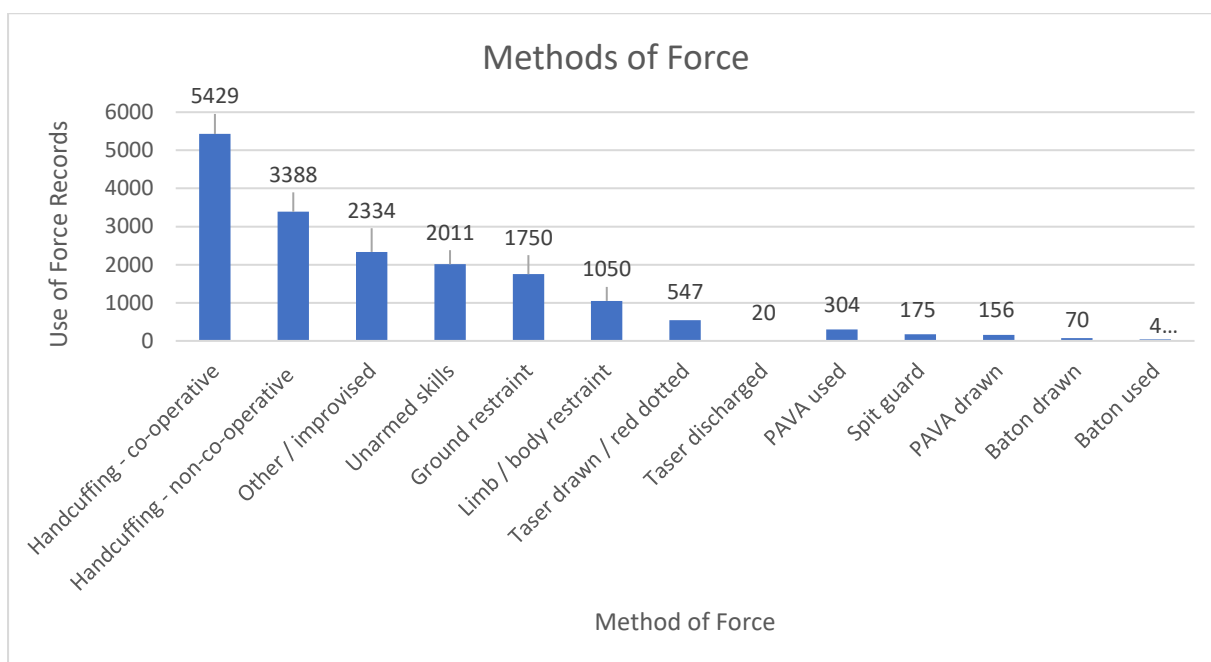
As was the case last year, **handcuffing** was by some margin the **most used method of force** by officers this year, accounting for 8817 (69.3%) of use of force records (compared to 70% last year) (see figure 3). This would be entirely expected given that, in a vast majority of cases, handcuffing is used to **effect arrest** or **prevent escape** – the two **most common reasons for officers using force**. This year, effecting arrest was cited in 53% of use of force records (as was the case in 2022/23), whilst preventing escape was cited in 54% (compared to 51% last year).

In addition to the main reasons for using force (e.g. making an arrest), **'impact factors'** will often play a key part in an officer's decision-making around whether to use force and by which method. **'Size/gender/build'** of the individual involved was the most common impact factor, cited in 39% of use of force records this year; this would typically account for scenarios in which an officer is at a disadvantage when it comes to physical size and strength. **Alcohol** and **Drugs** are the next most common impact factors, cited in 34.5% and 33.7% of records this year respectively.

Acute Behavioural Disorder (ABD)⁹ was the least commonly given impact factor (appearing in 2% of records this year) but, given the severity of the condition and the national media attention it has gained in a policing context, it is a topic that the Panel would like to consider in more detail as part of its scrutiny in the coming year.

⁹ Acute Behavioural Disorder (ABD) is treated as a medical emergency. ABD is a rare form of severe mania, sometimes considered as part of the spectrum of manic-depressive psychosis and chronic schizophrenia. Persons suffering from ABD are highly vulnerable to sudden death from cardiac arrest, during or shortly after a strenuous struggle.

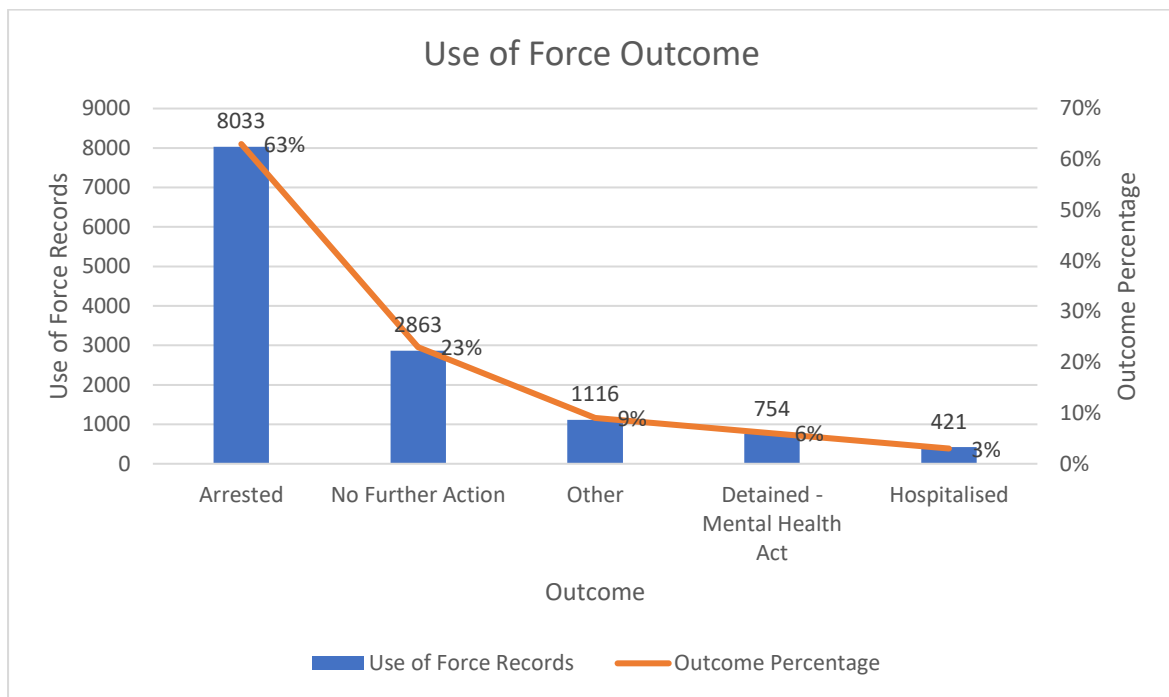
Figure 3: Methods of Use of Force in Hertfordshire, April 2023 to March 2024



(source: PowerBI, accessed 2nd May 2024)

The **most common outcome** (see **figure 4**) in use of force incidents this year was **arrest** of the individual involved, accounting for 63% of use of force records (compared to 62% last year). The only other outcome accounting for a sizeable portion of records (23%) was '**no further action**' (NFA) against the individual involved. (Use of force incidents with an outcome of NFA were the subject of the Panel's deep-dive at its March 2024 meeting, explained in more detail in the 'Panel Scrutiny' sub-section below.)

Figure 4: Use of Force by Outcome in Hertfordshire, April 2023 to March 2024



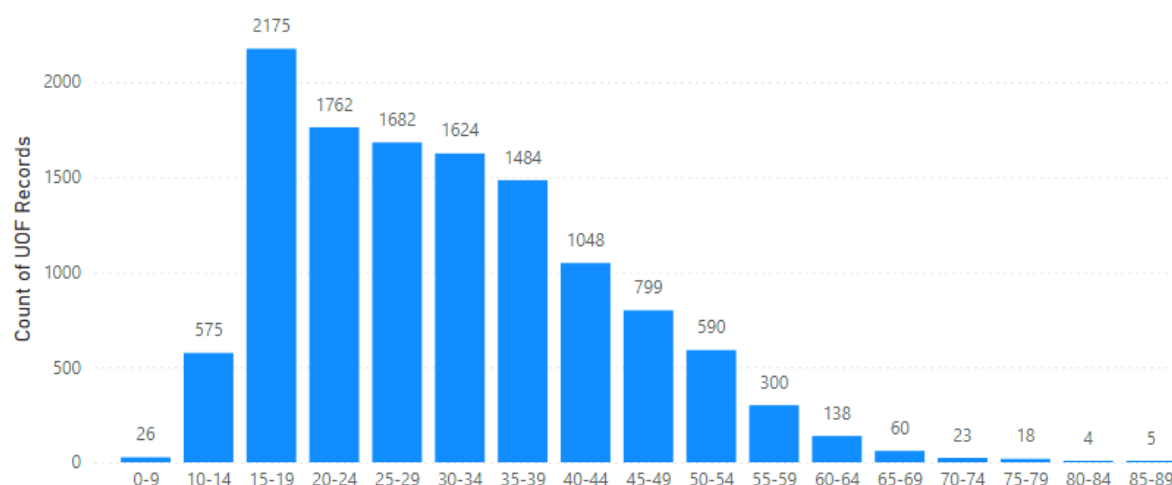
(source: PowerBI, accessed 2nd May 2024)

The most common demographic characteristics of people involved in use of force incidents this year are the same as those cited in last year's report:

- 70% were **White** (officer-defined ethnic appearance) (the same percentage as for 2022/23).
- 77% were **Male** (the same percentage as for 2022/23).
- 31% were aged between **15 and 24 years** (compared to 32% in 2022/23) (see figure 5).

Figure 5: Use of Force by Age Group in Hertfordshire, April 2023 to March 2024

Use of Force by Age Group



(source: PowerBI, accessed 2nd May 2024)

Panel Scrutiny

In scrutinising incidents, the Panel assesses whether use of force was justified, proportionate and lawful. It also considers wider factors around officer conduct including their behaviour and use of language and safety for both officers and members of the public. The RAG grading system used by the Panel is set out at Appendix B.

This year, the Panel scrutinised a total of **72 use of force incidents** via BWV and officer statements. This represents a **22% increase on last year** in terms of total incidents scrutinised. The Panel is pleased to have increased its tally of incidents scrutinised this year and will look to increase this further in the coming year. Of those 72 incidents, the Panel graded **66 (92%) as Green** (compared to 88% last year), **4 (6%) as Amber** (7% last year) and **2 (c.3%) as Red** (5% last year).

These headline findings indicate that the Panel remains confident, based on the incidents reviewed, that use of force by officers in Hertfordshire is justified, proportionate and lawful.

Figure 6: Breakdown of Panel's Gradings in 2023/24

Green	66	Green 1	58
		Green 2	8
Amber	4	Amber 3	2
		Amber 4	2
Red	2	Red 5	1
		Red 6	1
		Red 7	0

(source: Panel scrutiny records)

All Panel feedback on incidents is passed to the relevant Chief Inspector, whether it is to highlight excellent officer conduct or serious concerns. Positive feedback is used to recognise and reinforce good practice and informs individual and organisational learning and development. Where serious concerns are recorded (i.e. a Red grading), the relevant Chief Inspector will investigate further and return to the Panel with the outcome and any agreed next steps for the officer concerned, thus completing the feedback loop.

Case Study of an incident the Panel scored Green

Officers were called to an incident with a female in mental health crisis.

Panel members commented on the fact that officers were well-organised and communicated clearly with each other throughout the incident. The officer who drew a Taser was praised for their very calm directions given to the lady concerned. Panel members were so impressed with the officer's conduct that they agreed that the BWV footage could be used in a training situation to show other officers a good example of how to deal with someone in a mental health crisis. The corresponding officer statement was clearly written with a valid rationale for use of force that matched the BWV footage viewed by the Panel.

The Panel graded this incident as Green 1.

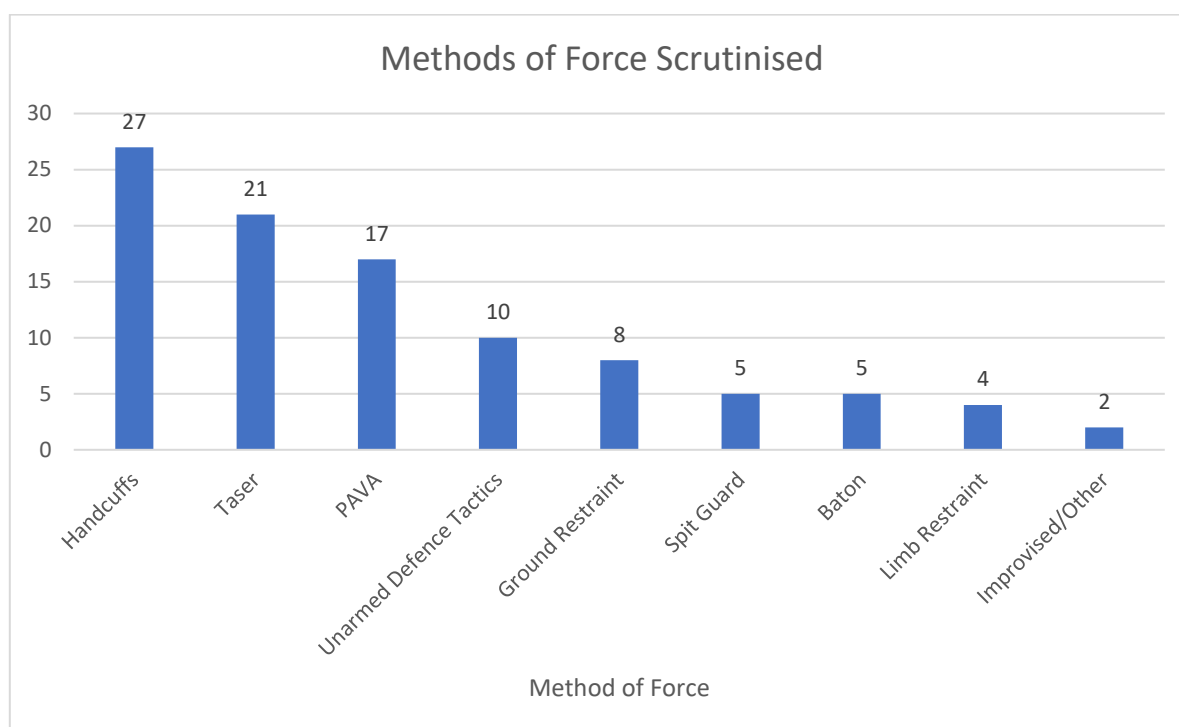
The Panel has reviewed a range of methods of force (see figure 7), dip-sampling across methods to ensure all receive appropriate levels of scrutiny during the year.¹⁰

Handcuffs (27) was the most scrutinised method of force this year, reflecting the fact this is the method most used by officers. Second highest was Conducted Energy Devices (CEDs) (21), commonly referred to as the brand name and registered trademark TASER®. This is a less lethal weapon designed to temporarily incapacitate an individual through use of an electrical current that temporarily interferes with the body's neuromuscular system and produces a sensation of intense pain. Only officers with specialised training can use CED.

Third highest was PAVA (17), which is a synthetic pepper spray. This is considered a low-level use of force and its effects are only temporary, leaving an individual with discomfort in their eyes for 10 to 15 minutes with no lasting effect. However, care is required to use it correctly as there are possible medical implications if guidelines are not followed. Officers are taught by PST that it should not be used within one metre of the individual, which could cause damage to the retina.

¹⁰ The total number of methods of force scrutinised by the Panel is larger than the total number of incidents scrutinised because an officer might be required to use more than one type of force in a single incident. The Panel might, for example, dip-sample a use of force record labelled Taser and find on viewing the BWV that the officer also uses handcuffs. On such occasions, the Panel will grade and score the entire incident taking into account all methods of force used.

Figure 7: Methods of Force Scrutinised by the Panel, April 2023 to March 2024



(Source: Panel scrutiny records)

This year, the Panel has continued to conduct a mix of countywide use of force scrutiny and scrutiny of specific “deep-dive” topics identified by the Panel’s data subgroup:

Areas of scrutiny focus in 2023/24	
May 2023: Countywide Use of Force incidents	November 2023: Incidents involving individuals aged 14 years and under
July 2023: Incidents involving Black individuals aged between 15 and 24 years	January 2024: Countywide Use of Force incidents
September 2023: Countywide Use of Force incidents	March 2024: Incidents with No Further Action as the outcome

At its meeting in July 2023 scrutinising incidents involving Black individuals aged between 15 and 24 years, the Panel noted that vulnerable individuals who appeared in some of the incidents were all treated very well by officers. The Panel had no concerns in relation to possible racial bias or discrimination.

In November 2023, the Panel assessed incidents involving individuals aged 14 years and under. Whilst most incidents were graded positively, one incident involving use of PAVA was graded Red as the Panel felt there was no clear rationale for its use and a lack of tactical communication between the two officers involved in the incident. In line with the Panel’s feedback loop, the Panel’s views were provided to the officer concerned and the relevant Inspector discussed the incident with them. It was felt by the officer involved that use of

PAVA was justified as the individual was actively resisting officers and aiming a headbutt in their direction, an assessment with which the Inspector concurred. The Panel accepted this assessment to complete the feedback loop.

In addition to the PAVA incident described above, the Panel graded as Red one additional incident this year. The incident involved an individual on an e-scooter which the Panel felt quickly and unnecessarily escalated from a stop and search to use of force whereby the individual was taken to the ground using unarmed defence tactics before having a spit guard applied. Feedback was provided to the Panel by the relevant CSP Chief Inspector, who stated that taking the individual to the floor was justified as he had previously resisted having handcuffs applied and attempted to walk away from officers, whilst the spit guard was necessary as spit was coming from his mouth in the direction of officers.

With all incidents, it is important to note that there may be a degree of intelligence on the individual which the Panel will not always be privy to which feeds into an officer's decision and the national decision-making model when justifying use of force.

In March 2024, the Panel focused its scrutiny on incidents with an outcome of No Further Action (NFA), having noted in the course of its regular assessment of Constabulary use of force data that approximately one in five incidents involving use of force result in NFA. No serious concerns were raised in this meeting and officers involved in the incidents scrutinised were generally praised by the Panel for exercising good judgement and restraint and using force to de-escalate confusing or fraught situations.



At certain points in the year, the Panel has been frustrated at being unable to secure written statements from officers. Whilst this has been a relatively rare occurrence, the lack of a statement means that the Panel does not have the benefit of the wider circumstances to an incident and the officer's own rationale and thinking behind using force. In such

circumstances, Panel members are forced to attempt to make gradings based on BWV alone in a partial information vacuum without the broader context.

In response, the Constabulary has amended its Use of Force Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) so that officers must, in addition to recording use of force on tuServ, create an MG11 (i.e. a statement) outlining the justification for their use of force. This change was implemented in January 2024 and has had a hugely positive impact on the Panel's ability to straightforwardly secure statements from officers as they are now, as a matter of policy, already on file. The Constabulary also recognised this policy change as representing general good practice, given that officers are personally responsible for their use of force and may be required to justify their actions in criminal, civil or disciplinary proceedings. A written record of their use of force may be invaluable in these circumstances. This is a tangible and positive example of the Panel having a direct and meaningful impact on Constabulary policy and practice.

The Panel identified some common themes this year in incidents which failed to achieve a Green grading:

- The use of force was not considered proportionate in the circumstances.
- The incident was unnecessarily escalated by inexperienced officers due to a lack of clear tactical communications.
- Poorly written statements in which the rationale and justification for using force is missing or unclear.

In addition, the Panel has continued to flag incidents in which officers use bad language with members of the public. Whilst the Panel appreciates that officers are involved in often stressful situations, members continue to view incidents where swearing has had a negative impact on a situation, heightening rather than de-escalating tensions. The Panel is also aware that the training new officers receive on tactical communications is very clear on this subject, stating that it is never acceptable to use inappropriate or bad language. Use of bad language can give the impression of poor officer attitude which can in turn undermine public trust and confidence in the police.

If we are to continue increasing the Panel's confidence in officers' use of force, officers would need to demonstrate, on an even more consistent basis, that:

- Use of force was clearly lawful, justified and proportionate, through BWV and corresponding statements.
- They remained calm and controlled the situation well.
- Written statements are clear and concise with a convincing rationale for using force, and plainly match what is viewed in the corresponding BWV.
- They acted with the appropriate level of care and consideration for the individual and kept the safety of officers and members of the public firmly in mind.
- They conducted themselves in a professional manner with no use of bad language.

8. Use of Force in Custody

In June 2022, HMICFRS published its report on its unannounced inspection visit to police custody suites in Hertfordshire.¹¹ One of the report's recommendations advised scrutinising force used in custody suites, including viewing CCTV footage of incidents.

The Panel has since implemented this recommendation and now reviews use of force CCTV footage from the custody suites in Hatfield and Stevenage at its meetings. This remains a relatively small portion of the Panel's scrutiny, with three incidents reviewed over the course of the year and all graded Green. The objective in the coming year is to increase the sample size of custody footage assessed by members without undermining the Panel's continued upward trajectory in terms of wider BWV scrutinised. It should be entirely feasible for the Panel to assess three to four custody incidents at each of its meetings without reducing its scrutiny of BWV.

CCTV footage in custody cells has no audio, which makes grading incidents more challenging for members and means that the Panel is particularly reliant on clear officer statements to make informed judgements regarding use of force.

9. Complaints

All expressions of dissatisfaction are initially logged by the Hertfordshire OPCC's Complaint Resolution Team (CRT). Those complaints which meet a certain risk criterion and any logged matters which cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction are referred to the Constabulary's Professional Standards Department (PSD).

In 2023/24:

- 118 complaints relating to Use of Force were made by the public.
- 12,719 use of force records were completed in Hertfordshire. This means there was a complaint raised for 0.9% of all use of force records.
- Of the 118 use of force complaints received, common themes tended to consist of: misuse of restraint equipment; alleged discrimination; individual officer behaviour of either being intolerant, impolite, unprofessional, or overbearing; or around delivery of duties and services relating to information or decisions.

The Panel continues to review CRT complaints data on a quarterly basis to identify any issues or trends of potential concern that might inform future scrutiny. One ambition for the coming year is to explore how, in addition to reviewing complaints data, the Panel can better utilise the rich data sets collected by CRT to enhance further its scrutiny of use of force.

10. Conclusion

This report evidences the Panel's view that, based on the use of force incidents it has scrutinised, there are no serious concerns about use of force by Hertfordshire Constabulary

¹¹ <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/unannounced-inspection-of-custody-suites-in-hertfordshire/>

officers. Of those use of force incidents the Panel scrutinised this year, 92% were graded Green. Only two incidents this year were Graded Red by the Panel.

This year has been one of progress for the Panel itself as it continued to evolve and develop with the aim of strengthening the breadth and impact of its scrutiny. The Panel has increased by 22% the amount of use of force incidents scrutinised this year compared to last year and is ambitious to continue increasing the totality of scrutiny it undertakes so that its sample size of the total volume of use of force records is enhanced.

Whilst it is important to note the Panel's successes this year, there is further progress to be made. In 2024/25, the Panel will deliver on the following recommendations to enhance even further the role it plays in scrutinising use of force powers in Hertfordshire:

- Continue to implement the Health Check recommendations and adopt the Home Office's draft National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels to ensure that the Panel aligns with national best practice.
- Continue to increase the average number of incidents scrutinised at meetings across the year.
- Continue to increase the sample size of custody CCTV footage as a proportion of the Panel's wider scrutiny.
- Adopt a more data-influenced approach to scrutiny work, making more sophisticated use of PowerBI to understand trends and anomalies and identify issues requiring further investigation – and tracking progress over time. The Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel is adopting such an approach for its work around disproportionality and more widely, and the rich amount of data available to the Use of Force Scrutiny Panel means it can implement the same approach.
- Deliver a communications strategy spanning the OPCC's scrutiny panels to increase community awareness of and involvement in the panels' work.
- Find effective ways to deliver a more diverse Panel membership by ethnicity, age and those with lived experience of police activity.
- Continue to identify public venues for meetings to maximise opportunities for members of the public to observe the Panel's work; and work to establish effective, practical hybrid meeting options to help attract and retain younger, more diverse panel members.
- Work with the OPCC's CRT to understand how its rich data sets can be used to inform and advance areas of Panel scrutiny.

Progress against delivering on these recommendations is already underway and will be reported on in full in next year's annual report.

Appendix A: Progress Review on Last Year's Recommendations

2022/23 recommendations		Progress update
1.	Improve member representation to reflect the community in Hertfordshire, based on Race and Ethnicity, Age, Gender/Sexual Orientation, Religion and Disabilities (mental & physical).	Work in progress. The Panel has expanded its membership this year, but further work is underway to enhance the diversity of its membership. (This will remain a high priority for the coming year.)
2.	Review current panel roles and whether these need to be widened to include an Engagement Lead, and a Data Champion, and to explore the benefits of setting up associated task and finish groups to deliver on the recommendations of the health check.	Complete. Refreshed terms of reference and member profiles have been completed. These are published on the OPCC website and reviewed annually to ensure they remain fit for purpose.
3.	Review the RAG grading to ensure it remains fit for purpose and incorporates judgements on the safety of officers in use of force situations as outlined in the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Report ¹² .	Complete. The RAG grading system has been reviewed and updated to ensure Panel judgements around safety are factored in. The grading system is reviewed and updated as required to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
4.	Increase the availability of data and to use the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) provided by the health check (e.g., top ten officers who use force, use of force by gender etc) so the Panel can conduct effective deep dives.	Complete. The Panel has taken a more data-influenced approach to its scrutiny this year. But there is more to do and it will continue to evolve and expand how it uses data to inform its scrutiny in the coming year.
5.	Develop an external Communications and Engagement Plan to raise awareness of the Panel, its successes and findings using a range of communication channels and platforms including social media.	Work in progress. A joint communications strategy across all OPCC scrutiny panels is in development. This will focus on raising community awareness of the Panels' activities, and will also drive forward progress on recommendation 1 above on securing more diverse Panel memberships.

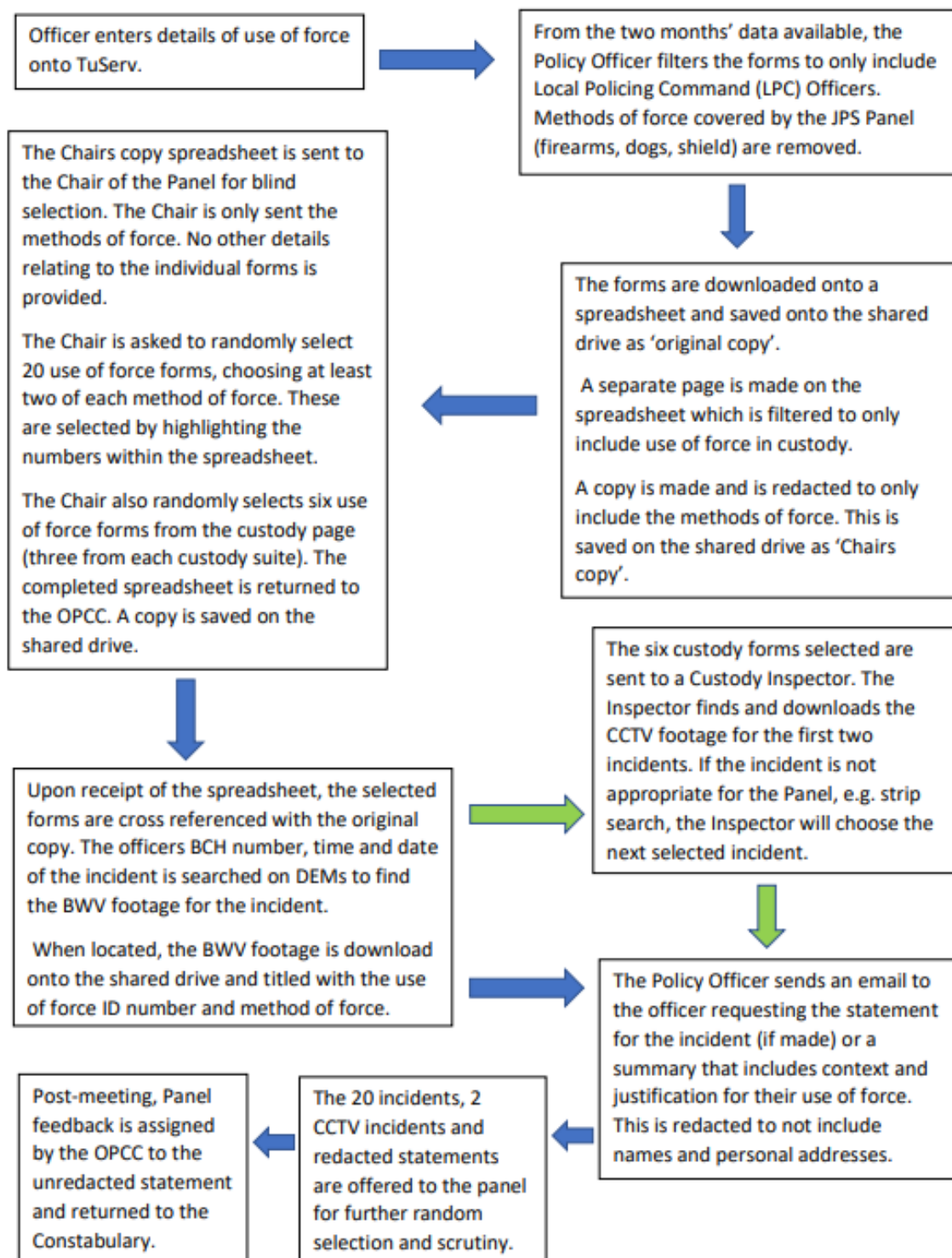
¹² The HSE investigated the circumstances surrounding the death of a police officer in a custody suite in other force from a weapon concealed on a detainee. HSE identified several actions that police forces should take to reassure but not adequate control measures and management arrangements are in place.

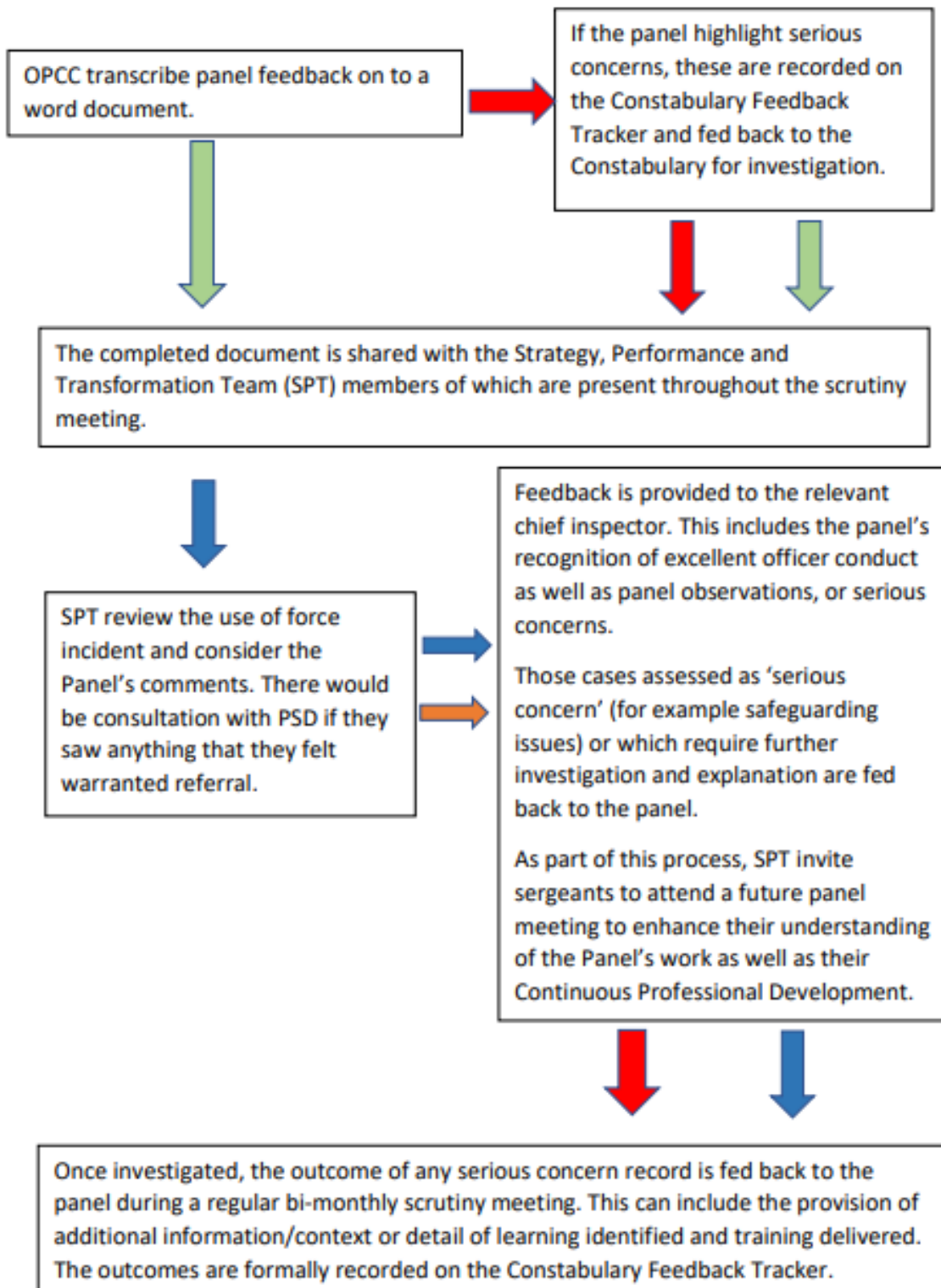
6.	Widen the training offer to members and use a learning management system to digitally deliver, and track and record training, and look for members to renew their core training every two years.	Business as usual. The Panel has expanded its training offer to members this year and offered refresher/renewal training to members at regular opportunities. Further work is required to explore the potential utility of a learning management system.
7.	Continue to explore options to ensure meetings are held efficiently and effectively, to review a minimum of ten use of force incidents at each meeting (60 for the year).	Business as usual. Meetings are structured and managed in a way that maximises time allotted to scrutiny. The Panel reviewed an average of 12 incidents per meeting this year, exceeding its minimum target. The ambition is to further increase the number of incidents scrutinised by the Panel in the coming year.
8.	Continue to review CCTV footage of use of force in custody, and to consider ways to increase the number of incidents that are scrutinised.	Business as usual. Reviewing CCTV custody footage is a standing item of Panel activity. The aim for the coming year is to increase the amount of footage assessed as a proportion of the Panel's wider scrutiny.

Appendix B: Panel RAG Grading System for Use of Force Incidents

Use of Force was necessary and undertaken reasonably and professionally.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The correct level for the use of force was applied throughout the encounter and full justification of force appeared in the footage or was given in the record/statement. No part of the encounter requires further clarification. 2. The correct level for the use of force was applied throughout the encounter and full justification of force appeared in the footage or was given in the record/statement. However, there are minor matters that need to be drawn to the officer's attention from the Panel's observations.
We understand why force was used but advice and/or training issues are required.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Force used was justified in the footage or in the record/statement but applied for too long or, having chosen the correct level of force, the officer's proficiency in its use and aftercare was lacking. The Panel have minor concerns around verbal communication and behaviour used by the officer. 4. Force was originally justified in the footage or in the record/statement, but the officer escalated the incident to a higher level too quickly and disproportionately. The Panel have concerns around verbal communication and/or poor behaviour used by the officer (for example excessive swearing which escalates the incident).
Use of Force was not necessary nor compliant with PLANTER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. The level for the use of force does not appear proportionate to the risk faced by the officer and/or the public. 6. The level for the use of force appears significantly greater than that necessary to protect the officer and/or the public and the Panel had additional concerns. 7. The officer appears to use force entirely without justification and did so to injure/punish or in a discriminatory fashion.
Insufficient information provided.	<p>The Panel cannot make an accurate decision and require more information in order to review the footage (e.g., no statement provided, footage is blurred or obstructed).</p> <p>The Constabulary will make inquiries and update the Panel at the next meeting.</p>

Appendix C: Use of Force Scrutiny Panel Feedback Loop





Glossary of Terms

Terms	Acronym (if applicable)	Description
Body Worn Video	BWV	The cameras officers wear to capture both video and audio evidence.
Community Safety Partnership	CSP	Community Safety Partnerships are made up of representatives from the police, Local Authorities, fire and rescue authorities, health, and probation services (the 'responsible authorities'). The responsible authorities work together to protect their local communities from crime and to help people feel safer.
Conducted Energy Devices (TASER®)	CED	<p>A CED is a less lethal weapon system designed to temporarily incapacitate a subject through use of an electrical current that temporarily interferes with the body's neuromuscular system and produces a sensation of intense pain.</p> <p>Conducted energy devices are commonly referred to as Taser. However, police forces should recognise that TASER® is a brand name and registered trademark for one brand of CED.</p>
Custody Suite		Hertfordshire has two custody suites, located in Stevenage and Hatfield. These are where officers process and detain those who have been arrested.
Microsoft PowerBI		Power BI is an interactive data visualisation software product developed by Microsoft with a primary focus on business intelligence.
Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner	OPCC	The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner helps the Commissioner to discharge their statutory duties and deliver the Police and Crime Plan.
Pelargonic Acid Vanillyl Amide	PAVA	PAVA aerosols are the irritant sprays evaluated and approved for use by the police service.
PLANTER	PLANTER	<p>A scrutiny panel assessment matrix to assess whether force used was proportionate, necessary and reasonable:</p> <p>P - Was the use of force Proportionate for the risk faced by the officer?</p> <p>L - Was the length of time the force used acceptable?</p> <p>A - Do the actions of the member of the public warrant force to be used?</p> <p>N - Was it necessary to use force?</p> <p>T - Was the type of force used appropriate?</p>

		<p>E - Was it ethical to use force in the situation?</p> <p>R - Was it reasonable for the officer to use force?’</p>
Red-Amber-Green Grading System	RAG	Also known as 'traffic lighting,' this rating system is used to summarise indicator values, where green denotes a 'favourable' value, red an 'unfavourable' value and amber a 'neutral' value.
tuServ		tuServ is a mobile policing application used in Hertfordshire and is where officers record use of force.

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Hertfordshire Independent Body Worn Video Scrutiny Panel Annual Report 2023/24



**Police & Crime
Commissioner**
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Chair's Foreword



As Chair of the newly created Hertfordshire Independent Body Worn Video (BWV) Scrutiny Panel, I am delighted to present our first annual report.

The Panel has been in a pilot phase since April 2022 and became effective as a full panel in October 2023. We are a small team of 11 panel members with the aim to recruit more members over the year to increase our capacity to review more BWV. Currently we meet every 2 months with a preference to meet face to face.

We have been able to scrutinise 6-8 BWV footage per meeting with a focus on compliance to the Hertfordshire BWV policy and professionalism of the Police Officers.

Over the course of the past year our focus has been on Domestic Abuse, Mental Health, Police Generated, Rowdy / Nuisance and Violence. We have also conducted two deep dives on Stevenage and St Albans Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) and our video reviews are selected randomly from the previous 2 months' worth of data.

The support and transparency provided by the Constabulary to the Panel has been exceptional. We have built an excellent working relationship which has helped us to introduce a system of recognition when outstanding performance has been observed and also when areas of concern have been identified and require feedback and reflection from the Officer involved.

Our focus for this year is to increase membership which will allow for increased review of BWV footage. We have also added Safety of the Public and Police Officers to our purpose.

Diversity within the team is currently good however can be enhanced further so this will be taken into consideration when recruiting.

We are the newest and smallest scrutiny panel with an amazing team who have worked hard to get the panel to official status, and I would like to take the time to express my sincere gratitude for all their support and dedication. We work alongside staff from the Office for Police Crime & Commissioner (OPCC) and I would like to express my thanks for their invaluable support in ensuring our meetings run smoothly. It is this diverse team that makes us successful.

Ann Hunter

Chair of the Hertfordshire Independent Body Worn Video Scrutiny Panel

Police and Crime Commissioner's Foreword



Since taking office in May 2024, I am pleased to witness already the impressive breadth of independent scrutiny of Hertfordshire Constabulary undertaken by committed volunteers.

The Body Worn Video (BWV) Scrutiny Panel is the newest addition to the scrutiny panels managed by my office and augments the scrutiny work on use of police powers already undertaken so effectively by the OPCC's Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel and Use of Force Scrutiny Panel.

BWV is a vital tool in modern policing and represents a step-change in transparency in policing activity. It is an important safeguarding measure, protecting officers from potentially malicious allegations and accelerating resolution of complaints. It is an invaluable evidence-gathering device in criminal investigations, whilst it also aids officer learning and development, highlighting good practice as well as areas for improvement in interactions with the public.

In addition to these key benefits, BWV fundamentally advances the potential scope of independent scrutiny of policing activity. BWV opens police practices to communities for closer examination, and I am delighted that Hertfordshire's BWV Scrutiny Panel is helping to maximise the technology's benefits in this respect. The Panel has established a well-defined remit in identifying trends around levels of compliance in the use of BWV, officer attitude, and behaviour and professionalism in interactions with members of the public. These significant insights in turn support me in effectively discharging my duty to hold the Chief Constable to account.

I am grateful to our panel members for volunteering their time to the important work of the BWV Scrutiny Panel, and I look forward to working with them over the coming year as they continue to refine and expand their scrutiny activity in their first full year as a permanent OPCC Scrutiny Panel.

Jonathan Ash-Edwards

Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire Constabulary's Foreword



As the Senior Officer responsible for the oversight of the Use of Police Powers, I am pleased to note the first annual report from the Body Worn Video (BWV) Scrutiny Panel. The work of the panel provides vital independent scrutiny and oversight of the Constabulary's use and deployment of BWV as we interact with the public.

As with much of policing, the methods and tools we use to record evidence in fighting crime and keeping people safe are not without risk in terms of public confidence. Indeed, in the case of BWV its use or omission can impact on communities and policing legitimacy.

In general terms, we seek to use BWV in an 'overt way' in every formal interaction with the public where we are likely to record evidential material. We set clear guidance to all officers with regards to when and how to use this equipment, and vitally to ensure the public know that this is being used. Not only to ensure we capture the best possible evidence but also to reassure the public that policing is accountable and professional in its dealings with them.

The work of the panel is not only to ensure we comply with these policies and guidance but also to provide independent oversight and feedback to our officers on the way in which these interactions are conducted, seeking to ensure that any interactions are professionally conducted and safe for all parties.

Finally, it is important to note that the work of the panel does not operate in a vacuum, indeed when the panel meets, we have in attendance supervisors and operational officers whose presence allows the panel to ask questions to inform its decision-making, and allows operational officers to see the work of the panel, feed back to their peers and inform and improve operational practice.

We are lucky to have the panel in place, acting as an independent 'critical friend' representing the communities of Hertfordshire and holding the Constabulary to account. I look forward to continuing this work with the panel in the coming year.

Chief Superintendent Dean Patient

Chair of Hertfordshire Constabulary's Police Powers Board



Members of the Hertfordshire Independent Body Worn Video Scrutiny Panel at their meeting in April 2024 at Stevenage Fire Station

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key findings

- The Panel met six times and scrutinised 36 BWV incidents over the year, an average of 6 incidents per meeting.
- The Panel scrutinised a broad range of different police-defined incident categories including domestic incidents, violence, rowdy nuisance, and police generated activity.
- Of the 36 incidents reviewed, 9 were graded Green, 26 Amber¹, and 1 Red.
- The Panel identified a set of common themes during its scrutiny work this year:
 - Most BWV incidents viewed by the Panel were handled calmly and effectively by officers, although there were some incidents where the Panel felt officers could have gained quicker control of the situation.
 - Officers tended not to inform members of the public they were being recorded on BWV.
 - Officers were praised for their sensitive handling of situations involving vulnerable members of the public.
 - Officer safety was flagged as a concern on multiple occasions, with officers occasionally putting themselves in unnecessary danger. (The Panel's grading system has been adapted as a result to factor in Panel consideration of safety for officers and members of the public.)
 - Officers were not always equipped with suitable kit.
 - Officer statements occasionally lacked a clear rationale for their decision-making or did not reflect what the Panel viewed in the corresponding BWV.

Key achievements

- The Panel has completed a successful pilot period and is now established on a permanent basis as a Scrutiny Panel managed by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC).
- The Panel has adapted and evolved its working practices in its first year on a permanent footing and has formed a clear purpose and remit around assessing appropriate use of Body Worn Video and whether officer decision-making adheres to public service values of high standards and professional personal conduct.
- The Panel has operated effective and efficient bi-monthly meetings throughout the year to deliver on this purpose and remit.
- Its work has complemented the specific focus of the Stop and Search and Use of Force Scrutiny Panels on use of police powers to provide wider insights and observations around officer behaviour and conduct. Hertfordshire now has a richer and more robust police scrutiny landscape as a result.

¹ The high number of Amber grades is due to many officers failing to announce to members of the public that they are being recorded on BWV. The Panel's grading system in use for most of the reporting period meant that this BWV policy compliance issue resulted in an Amber score by default. The grading system was amended towards the end of the reporting period to ensure that it can more appropriately grade incidents in which officer conduct and decision-making is otherwise excellent but still record the fact of failing to notify the member of the public they are being recorded.

- Panel members have taken up a multitude of training opportunities throughout the year, including refresher training, observation of officer training, and ‘Ride Alongs’ with the Constabulary.
- In line with the Health Check recommendations, Panel meetings have been hosted at different external locations across the county, helping to build positive working relationships with partner organisations and facilitate attendance and participation in meetings by Neighbourhood Policing Teams across Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs).

Recommendations for year ahead (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)

- Increase the number of BWV incidents scrutinised, seeking to average 10 incidents per meeting over the course of next year.
- Increase the size of its membership through effective recruitment to facilitate a greater amount of scrutiny, enabling the Panel to break out into groups in line with practice adopted by the other Scrutiny Panels.
- Find effective ways to deliver a more diverse Panel membership by ethnicity, age and those with lived experience of police activity.
- Support the delivery of a communications strategy spanning the OPCC’s scrutiny panels to increase community awareness of and involvement in the panels’ work.
- Adopt a more data-influenced approach to scrutiny work, making more sophisticated use of PowerBI and other police data to understand trends and anomalies and identify issues requiring further investigation – and tracking progress over time.
- Continue to identify public venues for meetings to maximise opportunities for members of the public to observe the Panel’s work; and working to establish effective, practical hybrid meeting options to help attract and retain younger, more diverse panel members.
- Continue to implement the Health Check recommendations and adopt the Home Office’s draft National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels to ensure that the Panel aligns with national best practice.

Become a Member of the BWV Scrutiny Panel!

We are recruiting for new Members! As a Panel Member you would:

- **Attend and participate in Panel meetings.** Meetings last for 2.5 hours and are currently held bi-monthly mostly in person, during the day, across the county. Our ambition is to make Panel Meetings as flexible and inclusive as possible, and we continue to develop optimum online and hybrid options.
- **Be offered training to support your scrutiny,** including the opportunity to go on a Ride Along with police officers.
- **Be paid travel expenses.** Whilst this is a voluntary role, the OPCC meets any reasonable travel expenses incurred by Panel members.

We welcome applications from anyone who lives, works or studies in Hertfordshire. The OPCC is particularly interested to hear from younger people and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

If you are interested in finding out more about becoming a Panel Member, please email Susan McNeill at the OPCC: susan.mcneill@herts-pcc.gov.uk

1. Introduction

The use of Body Worn Video (BWV) is an incredibly powerful tool in modern policing and when used properly has the power to transform how we police. First and foremost, it fundamentally advances transparency in policing activity. We see the benefits of this through the police complaints process where its evidence frequently provides speedy resolution in cases that in the past might have dragged on for years. It also has fantastic evidence-gathering potential in criminal investigations – providing compelling support to officer testimonies, picking up details that might otherwise have been missed, and giving victims and witnesses the opportunity to have their stories captured in the moment. BWV plays an equally important part in officer learning and development, shining a light on good practice as well as errors.

For these reasons, BWV is something that should be embraced wholeheartedly and exploited to its fullest potential. External scrutiny, and the ability of BWV to open police practices to communities for closer examination, is a fundamental part of maximising the technology's benefits. With that objective in mind, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) last year established a new scrutiny panel – the Hertfordshire Independent Body Worn Video (BWV) Scrutiny Panel (hereafter referred to as 'the Panel') – to identify any trends around areas for improvement and support individual and organisational learning in relation to levels of compliance in the use of BWV, officer attitude, and behaviour at incidents.

This is the first annual report of the Panel, which was established on a permanent footing in October 2023 following a successful pilot period. The report summarises the work undertaken by the Panel from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and details the Panel's history and background to date.

The report sets out how the Panel complements and augments the scrutiny of police powers undertaken by the well-established Hertfordshire Independent Stop and Search and Use of Force Scrutiny Panels to deliver rich and varied insights into officer conduct and interactions with the public via scrutiny of BWV. The technology is a brilliant tool for providing insight. It brings statements to life by enabling Panel members to witness first-hand officer interactions and the behaviours, language and intonation tied up in those interactions – all things that simply are not possible through reading a written statement. BWV also enables Panel members to make independent judgements based on what they see and hear in interactions which would otherwise be based on an officer's perspective. In this respect, the Panel and its use of BWV makes a telling and progressive contribution to the dynamic and wide-ranging police scrutiny landscape in Hertfordshire.

The report concludes by highlighting the Panel's key achievements this year and proposes recommendations to deliver further growth and success in the year to come.

Profile of Hertfordshire

- Hertfordshire is a large county stretching from Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire to the north to the outskirts of London in the south. It borders Buckinghamshire to the west and Essex to the east.
- Hertfordshire has a population of 1,204,588. 28.2% of residents are from an ethnic minority compared to 26.5% in England as a whole.
- Urban areas make up around a third of Hertfordshire by area and account for around 89% of the population. There is no single dominant large urban centre. In total, there are 40 settlements with 4,000 or more residents in each.
- Hertfordshire Constabulary has Neighbourhood Policing Teams which operate in each of the ten Community Safety Partnerships. These represent the ten local district and borough councils: Dacorum, East Herts, North Herts, Welwyn Hatfield, Broxbourne, Hertsmere, Watford, Three Rivers, St Albans, and Stevenage.
- Hertfordshire has lower crime levels than the national average: 64.6 crimes per 1,000 residents compared to 82.2 in England (Feb 2023 – Jan 2024). However, levels of antisocial behaviour incidents are higher: 21.3 per 1,000 residents compared to 14.7 in England (Feb 2023 – Jan 2024).

See [HertsInsight](#) (ONS Census 2021 Data, ONS mid-2022 population estimates, April 2024) for references and more information.

2. Background

BWV is a vital tool in modern policing. It provides critical evidence, promotes officer safety, improves transparency and trust between the police and communities, and enables officer and wider organisational learning and development.

It also provides new and positive opportunities to expand independent community scrutiny of policing, particularly around officer compliance with BWV policy, decision-making, and conduct and professionalism in interactions with members of the public. The OPCC has sought to make the most of this rich potential by establishing a new independent scrutiny panel that supports the PCC in discharging their statutory duty to hold the Chief Constable to account by assessing the appropriate use of BWV and that officer decision-making is adhering to public service values of high standards and professional personal conduct.

The Panel's pilot was signed off in September 2021 and, following successful scoping work, the Panel convened for the first time in April 2022 with nine volunteer members who lived, worked or studied in Hertfordshire. After demonstrating its value during its pilot period, the Panel was established on a permanent basis in October 2023 and continues to meet on a bi-monthly basis to scrutinise BWV incidents alongside officer statements.

The Panel in operation today took shape during its pilot phase, with key decisions being taken regarding its purpose and remit. It was decided at an early stage, for example, that the

Panel would incorporate within its scrutiny criteria key questions relating to BWV policy compliance, including officers noting if the camera was switched on at the earliest opportunity and informing individuals they are being recorded. It was also agreed that the Panel's scope would be broadened to examine officer conduct, providing a wider understanding of the way officers handle different incidents, whilst mitigating the risk of duplication with the Stop and Search and Use of Force Panels and their very specific remits around use of police powers.

It was decided that BWV footage would be selected based on themes, enabling the Panel to drill down and explore thematics such as violence, domestic incidents, and mental health. A new RAG (Red-Amber-Green) grading system and accompanying feedback sheet were created to reflect the Panel's distinct role and purpose and enable members to making informed and meaningful assessments. The Panel's development was strongly supported by representatives from Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Since being placed on a permanent footing in October 2023, the Panel has continued to demonstrate its value by providing key insights into officer compliance, professionalism, safety and decision-making, delivering a distinct, but complementary strand of scrutiny alongside the work of the Stop and Search and Use of Force Scrutiny Panels on the use of police powers that enhances the totality of scrutiny undertaken in Hertfordshire.

3. Panel Membership and Leadership

The Panel has benefited from consistent and valued leadership since its first meeting in April 2022. Ann Hunter has served as Chair of the Panel since June 2022 and Daren Power has served as Vice Chair since June 2023. The meetings are run efficiently to ensure the Panel delivers on its objective to provide effective scrutiny. They also work in close partnership with the OPCC to identify and implement measures that will continue to grow and strengthen the impact of the Panel.

As of 31 March 2024, the Panel had a total membership of 11 members, all of whom live, work or study in Hertfordshire and bring a wealth of valuable experience and insights to its work. During the year, three new members joined the Panel and two members stepped down.

The Panel's overall membership remains relatively small and one key ambition for the coming year is to increase the size of its membership to enable a greater volume of records to be scrutinised at panel meetings. A larger membership would, for example, enable the Panel to break out into two or more groups and conduct scrutiny in parallel (as is standard practice by the Stop and Search and Use of Force Scrutiny Panels).

The Panel is also committed to strengthening the diversity of its membership to better represent the demographics in the wider county. The OPCC is continuing efforts to broaden the diversity of all its Panels' memberships by age, ethnicity and lived experience of the criminal justice system and addressing this point will be an absolute priority in the coming year. To deliver a more proactive approach to recruitment, the OPCC has developed a 'mock panel' model that will be delivered in colleges and educational settings to bring to life the

scrutiny process and engage proactively and directly with young people from less well represented communities throughout the county.

It is the Panel's target to reflect the demographics within Hertfordshire and we will continue to pursue a recruitment strategy that delivers as far as possible a Panel membership which echoes the thriving diversity in our county.

The following table provides a breakdown of Panel membership by gender, age and ethnicity compared against Hertfordshire's 2021 Census data:

Category	Panel	2021 Census ²
Gender		
Female	45.5%	51%
Male	54.5%	49%
Age		
16 – 24	0%	9.4%
25 – 39	0%	19.9%
40 – 54	36.3%	21.3%
55 – 70	27.3%	17.2%
70+	9.1%	12.5%
Prefer not to say	27.3%	
Self-defined Ethnicity		
White	72.7%	81.8%
Asian/Asian British	18.2%	8.6%
Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	0%	3.8%
Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African	9.1%	3.7%
Other Ethnic Group	0%	2.1%

4. Meetings

Terms of Reference (ToR) are in place to guide the work of the Panel and provide clarity and transparency around its remit, membership, and governance. These are reviewed every two years, but with flexibility in place to make amendments if circumstances require. The ToRs are published on the OPCC website.³

A Superintendent, Chief Inspector, Inspector and Sergeant (or combination thereof) from Hertfordshire Constabulary's Strategy, Performance and Transformation Department (OST) is present at all meetings to answer operationally specific questions from the Panel. Their role is not to provide an opinion or grading on an incident, but to advise on operational context or inform the Panel, when audio is unclear, what an officer would have heard through their earpiece. This support provides the Panel with all relevant information and in turn enables members to make informed gradings. Members of OST are responsible for ensuring

² ONS Census 2021 Hertfordshire: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/areas/E10000015/>

³ [bvv-panel-terms-of-reference-2024.pdf \(hertscommissioner.org\)](#)

feedback from the Panel is received by the relevant officer and their line management as appropriate.

Invitations to meetings are extended to other representatives across the Constabulary where appropriate; for instance, if there is a focus on a particular CSP, the relevant Chief Inspector will be invited to attend. As the Panel meets at different venues across the county, Sergeants and Police Constables from Neighbourhood Policing Teams are invited to attend to observe and understand the Panel's work. Feedback from attending officers continues to be very positive as it helps them understand public opinion on the deployment of police powers.

The Panel meets on a bi-monthly basis to review incidents which took place in the preceding two months. The Panel met on six occasions during this reporting period. Meetings follow an established format including standing agenda items (welcome, apologies, minutes, actions, and Constabulary feedback), with a majority of meeting time dedicated to scrutiny.

Panel members randomly select a BWV incident to observe from a numbered list supplied by the OPCC (which itself is randomly generated from police data - please see Appendix C). The Panel reads the officer's statement linked to the incident, before viewing the accompanying BWV footage. Panel members then discuss their observations in detail. They can pose any operationally specific questions to members of the Constabulary present in order to provide clarity. Panel members then form a commonly agreed grading for the incident using their RAG grading system and complete a feedback form with written observations which is conveyed to the officer concerned via the Constabulary lead.

An established feedback loop (see Appendix D) is in place between the Panel and the Constabulary, meaning that the work and views of the Panel has a direct and meaningful impact on the training and performance of officers on the frontline. Following each meeting all Panel feedback is circulated via the Strategy, Performance and Transformation Department to the officer's Sergeant or Inspector to deliver the feedback. All positive feedback is provided back to officers, and, in cases of exemplary conduct, the Panel will send a thank you note to the officer concerned.

Where the Panel raises specific concerns about any given incident, these are recorded on the Constabulary's action tracker and the outcome and any agreed next steps for the officer concerned are outlined to the Panel at its next meeting in order to complete the feedback loop. In rare cases involving potential serious misconduct, procedures are in place to enable the Panel to refer an incident to the Professional Standards Department (PSD).

5. Panel Training

On joining the Panel, new members participate in one or both core training sessions delivered to members of the Use of Force and Stop and Search Panels, which covers BWV Policy. In parallel, they receive core training to understand the purpose and remit of the Panel and the role and expectations placed on members. Members are offered refresher training on an ongoing basis.

Panel members are also encouraged at any point in their membership to participate in the Constabulary's Ride Along scheme, giving members the opportunity to join officers on patrol

and experience daily policing first-hand to provide them with the operational context in which stop and searches are conducted across different scenarios. With the help of the Constabulary, the Ride Along application process for Panel members was streamlined this year, significantly reducing wait times between applying and participating in the scheme.

We continue to work with the Constabulary to identify opportunities for Panel members to attend and observe officer training, not just for stop and search but for relevant wider topics such as Bias training. In December 2023 and January 2024, members from all OPCC Scrutiny Panels had the opportunity to attend 'Impact of Bias' training being delivered to frontline officers in Neighbourhood Policing Teams. This gave members additional insight into the training officers receive around how bias training is being used to minimise the impact of any assumptions, biases, or stereotyping and how that can impact decision-making in policing. Feedback from Panel members was extremely positive.

In line with the Health Check recommendations, the OPCC continues to explore how to improve and widen the training offer to Panel members to give them the best possible grounding to fulfil their scrutiny role effectively, including exploring what value might be added by potential external training providers to supplement what is already delivered in-house by the OPCC and Constabulary.

6. Health Check

Significant progress has been made this year in implementing the recommendations made by the independent Health Check of the governance and operations of the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel and Use of Force Scrutiny Panel, undertaken on behalf of the OPCC by Att10tive Social Enterprise.⁴ The Health Check concluded that in Hertfordshire the foundations and framework are in place to provide effective scrutiny and oversight of police powers. It identified areas of good practice and made recommendations for further areas of development which have been progressed at pace.

Whilst the BWV Panel was not fully established when the Health Check was completed, we have as a matter of policy implemented its recommendations across all three panels to ensure alignment between panels and with recommended best practice. In addition, we continue to focus on ensuring the panels' alignment with national best practice set out in the Home Office's draft National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels.

In the coming year, there will be a resolute focus on raising community awareness of, and involvement in, the work of OPCC scrutiny panels and continuing efforts to broaden the diversity of the Panels' membership by age, ethnicity and lived experience of the criminal justice system. These objectives will be delivered by a coherent, unified communications strategy sitting across all the OPCC's scrutiny panels. The Panel recognises that improving diverse attendance and membership must go hand-in-hand with considering what format panel meetings take in future. Meetings held during the day in a formal classroom setting

⁴ Att10tive Social Enterprise <https://att10tive.com/>

will not always appeal to younger people and those with different work or learning commitments.

7. Key Findings

7.1 Summary of scrutiny data and outputs

The Panel met six times this year and scrutinised a total of 36 BWV incidents in Hertfordshire (an average of six incidents per meeting). The aim for the coming year is to increase the totality of scrutiny undertaken by the Panel, which will go hand-in-hand with increasing the size and diversity of its membership.

For each meeting, the Panel is provided with a list of BWV incidents randomly selected from a range of police-defined categories from police records. Figure 1 summarises the number of incidents for each selected category that the Panel assessed this year. The incident categories provide the Panel with a diverse range of scenarios to view, including incidents involving domestic abuse, vehicle stops, violence and rowdy behaviour, and arrests and searches.

Figure 1: Incidents Scrutinised by Category, April 2023 to March 2024

Incident Category (as defined by Hertfordshire Constabulary)	Number of incidents scrutinised by the Panel
Police Generated	12
Rowdy Nuisance	9
Domestic Incident	8
Violence	7
TOTAL	36

The Panel's grading approach follows a Red-Amber-Green rating system in line with best practice and in alignment with the Stop and Search and Use of Force Scrutiny Panels. The Panel assesses incidents against a range of considerations including the officer's compliance with BWV policy, the completeness and clarity of their decision-making, their adherence to the College of Policing Code of Ethics, their effectiveness in controlling a situation and keeping themselves and members of the public safe, and their ability to build rapport with the public.

The grading system is detailed in Figure 2. (Please see Appendix A for the prompt sheet used by Panel members to assist their grading decisions.)

Figure 2: Panels RAG (Red-Amber-Green) Grading System (updated February 2024)

Green	<p>Appropriate with observation(s)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appropriate and consistent with Hertfordshire Constabulary Policies / Standard Operating Procedure. 2. Observation that officer did not inform member of the public they are being recorded, otherwise appropriate and consistent with Hertfordshire Constabulary Policies / Standard Operating Procedure.
Amber	<p>Appropriate with observation(s)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Observations relating to the officers' behaviour or performance. 2. Any other observations relating to policy / SOP compliance, or safety.
Red	Inappropriate and inconsistent with policy

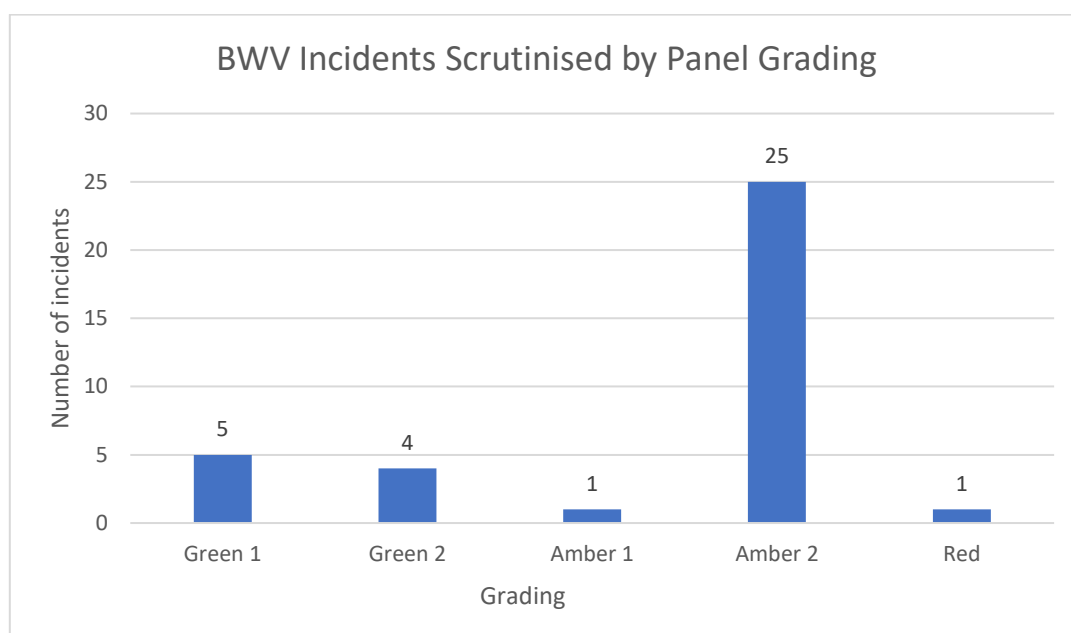
The chart at figure 3 summarises how the Panel graded the incidents it scrutinised over the course of the year.

Overall, the majority of incidents were graded 'Amber 2' (appropriate with observations) by the Panel. This is because the previous iteration of the grading system required Panel members to grade as Amber incidents where the officer did not inform the member of the public that they were being recorded (a BWV policy requirement), even if their approach and conduct was exemplary in all other respects. In February 2024, the grading system was amended to create a new 'Green 2' grade to enable the Panel to assess incidents in which the officer displays excellent conduct and decision-making whilst still recording the failure to inform a member of the public they are being video recorded.

The Panel were concerned that the previous grading system risked creating a false perception that officer behaviour and decision-making was somehow poor in most incidents viewed by the Panel, which has not been the case.

The revised RAG grading system also factors in the theme of safety within the Amber 2 grade which enables the Panel to assess officers' effectiveness in keeping themselves, fellow officers and members of the public safe. This amendment was introduced in response to recommendations made by the Health and Safety Executive and concerns raised in Panel feedback around officer safety and has been welcomed by the Constabulary.

Figure 3: summary of grades allocated to incidents scrutinised, April 2023 to March 2024



(source: Panel scrutiny records)

7.2 Key themes identified by the Panel

Most incidents were handled calmly and effectively by officers:

In most incidents viewed by the Panel, it was noted that officers handled the situation well. There were only two incidents reviewed by the Panel where the officer's decision-making was assessed as being poor or unclear. Officers were often calm in their approach to engaging the public and displayed good skills in de-escalating situations. There were, however, three incidents where officers' language and behaviour were judged too aggressive. In one of these incidents, an officer's language in dealing with a suspected drunk driver escalated the situation and resulted in unnecessary confrontation.

Officers tended not to inform members of the public they were being recorded:

In a majority of incidents, the officer failed to inform members of the public they were being recorded, which is a breach of Standard Operating Procedure. This prompted the Constabulary to circulate a reminder to all frontline officers, but compliance with this BWV policy requirement does remain a challenge.

Officers in most cases displayed empathy and concern for welfare where appropriate:

In six incidents reviewed by the Panel, officers were praised for their sensitive handling of situations involving vulnerable members of the public, for which they received positive feedback. However, in one domestic abuse-related incident assessed in December 2023, the Panel observed that an officer could have taken a more empathetic approach in communicating with children at the scene, where this was judged to be quite cold and lacking in care.

Officers occasionally put themselves in unnecessary danger:

Concerns for officer safety were raised in eight of the incidents reviewed. In one incident reviewed in October 2023, Panel members identified that an officer, intervening in a violent situation, attempted to deal with a detained person close to a railway line. In another incident viewed in December 2023, the Panel observed that the officer put themselves at risk by bending over to tie their shoelace when a front door they had knocked on was being answered. In the same incident they later went on to allow a detained person to switch handcuffs to the front stack position. (This incident partly prompted the amendment to the RAG grading system to factor in consideration of officer safety).

Officers could have established better control of the situation in some incidents:

There were seven incidents reviewed by the Panel where it was judged the officer could have established better control of the situation. This would sometimes have implications for officer safety and safeguarding. For instance, in one domestic abuse-related incident, the officer allowed the alleged perpetrator (male) to wander into the same space as his children while they were being questioned by police. In another example, an officer allowed a detained person to freely roam around and search their home, moving from room to room – it was suggested that officers would have been better restricting the person's movement to one room (specifically denying access to the kitchen for safety reasons).

Officers were not always equipped with suitable kit:

At the October 2023 meeting, the Panel noted in several incidents that officers had insufficient kit (spit guard, pens, drink/drive kit, etc.). and were therefore ill-equipped to deal with situations that they might need to take control of.

Officer statements could be improved:

Officer statements were provided for most of the incidents scrutinised over the course of the year; only four BWV incidents lacked a corresponding statement. The Panel has also noted that statements do not always reflect the BWV footage and sometimes omit crucial information which would have helped evidence the officer's decision-making.

7.3 Panel impact on Constabulary policy and practice

The Panel's work has had a positive impact on individual officer learning and development, and wider Constabulary policy and practice. Through their scrutiny, members have evidenced the clear trend of officers not informing members of the public they are being recorded on BWV. Important concerns have also been raised around officer safety which now forms a core question for the Panel in assessing incidents. At its meeting in August 2023, the Panel identified an inconsistency with the Constabulary's approach to dealing with no insurance vehicle stops. This observation resulted in guidance being sent to officers on what the correct policy should be for future incidents.

The Panel's feedback has had a positive impact on the conduct and behaviour of individual officers. During one piece of BWV footage, members observed that an officer's bad language escalated the aggressive behaviour of a drink driver. Their Inspector held a one-to-one

meeting with the officer and subsequently reflected back to the Panel that the officer's behaviour had improved.

7.4 Case studies of BWV incidents

The case studies below set out the Panel's observations on two separate incidents, to illustrate the types of issues and concerns that members typically identify when scrutinising incidents.

The first case study is an incident graded Green which received positive feedback, although there was some concern expressed for safety of the officers involved. The second case study is for an incident graded Red where serious concerns were identified, including a perceived aggressive attitude displayed by the officer, and an apparent absence of clear decision-making.

Case Study 1 – Example of an incident receiving positive feedback.

Category: Police Generated.

Context: Traffic stop. Officer stops driver for driving otherwise in accordance with a driving license (DL).

Panel comments: Statement provided. Camara started upon engagement. Person cautioned as officer learns 'driving other than in accordance with DL' and the detainee was a provisional licence holder with a pillion* passenger. Searched under Sec 23 MDA (intelligence that vehicle was linked to supply of drugs.) Video announcement made and right to search record heard. Further cautioned when arrested for possible offensive weapon. The panel was concerned that one officer turned away from the detainee once cuffed and they considered this to be an officer safety risk. All officers were calm, polite, and respectful. The team worked well together. Discussion followed regarding officers being 'too friendly.' The panel was advised that this was a tactical communications decision. Officers need to be approachable. In this case the detainees were young. From a safety viewpoint, the Panel raised why detainee seated on the car bonnet with traffic close by when large green area was available.

Grade: Green – with advice to be given to officer regarding their personal safety.

**A pillion is a secondary pad, cushion, or seat behind the main seat or saddle on a horse, motorcycle, bicycle or moped.*

Case Study 2 – Example of an incident where areas for significant improvement were identified.

Category: Police Generated.

Context: Traffic stop. Officer detains person for taking without consent and suspected drunk driving.

Panel comments: Statement provided. Camera switched on early, but the quality of the recording was poor, both in terms of lighting and angle. Footage skipped beyond the 'person check' as this is a lengthy process and not part of the scrutiny process. Detainee was arrested for 'taking without consent' and further arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol. The panel felt that the officer was somewhat confrontational; the detainee was cheeky but not aggressive. He appeared compliant. No mention of recording heard. It was not apparent to the panel as to why the handcuffs were applied. This should have been covered in the statement. Detainee was young and the officer believed he was even younger and the panel felt this did not warrant her combative attitude. They felt her decision-making process was questionable. The officer should have been more focused in her questioning.

Grade: Red – due to combative and judgemental attitude displayed by officer.

8. Conclusion

This report evidences the Panel's view that there are no serious concerns about Hertfordshire Constabulary officers' appropriate use of BWV, and that officer decision-making in almost all instances adheres to public service values of high standards and professional personal conduct. Where concerns have been raised, the Panel's feedback has been used as appropriate to inform individual officer learning and development and Constabulary policy and practice. The Constabulary has reported back to the Panel on outcomes and actions agreed in response to its concerns, ensuring a complete feedback loop (see Appendix D) for the Panel's work.

This year has been one of significant progress for the Panel following its establishment on a permanent basis. The Panel has evolved and adapted its own practices throughout the year to strengthen the meaning, relevance and impact of its scrutiny, and will continue to do so in the years to come.

Whilst we note its successes this year, the Panel is still in its early stages of development and there is much more exciting progress to be made.

In 2024/25, the Panel has agreed it will focus on delivering on the following recommendations, which will increase the totality and impact of its scrutiny and deliver closer alignment with both the Use of Force and Stop and Search Scrutiny Panels and national best practice as set out in the Home Office's draft National Guidance on Community Scrutiny Panels:

- Increase the number of BWV incidents scrutinised, seeking to average 10 incidents per meeting over the course of next year.

- Increase the size of its membership through effective recruitment in order to facilitate a greater amount of scrutiny, enabling the Panel to break out into groups in line with practice adopted by the other Scrutiny Panels.
- Find effective ways to deliver a more diverse Panel membership by ethnicity, age and those with lived experience of police activity.
- Support the delivery of a communications strategy spanning the OPCC's scrutiny panels to increase community awareness of and involvement in the panels' work.
- Adopt a more data-influenced approach to scrutiny work, making more sophisticated use of PowerBI and other police data to understand trends and anomalies and identify issues requiring further investigation – and tracking progress over time.
- Continue to identify public venues for meetings to maximise opportunities for members of the public to observe the Panel's work; and working to establish effective, practical hybrid meeting options to help attract and retain younger, more diverse panel members.
- Continue to implement the Health Check recommendations and adopt the Home Office's draft National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels to ensure that the Panel aligns with national best practice.

Progress against delivering on these recommendations is already underway and will be reported on in full in next year's annual report.

Appendix A: Prompt Sheet for Panel Members

This prompt sheet is to help panel members expand on the grading sheet questions to help provide overall comments for the footage they are scrutinising. The overall comments box is where officers gain the best feedback. This should include why they have given the score they have, what was good about the incident they viewed and what improvements there could have been.

Supplementary Questions

Was the camera turned on at the earliest opportunity?

- If the camera was switched on at the earliest opportunity, at what stage was this? For example, in the car arriving at the scene, before conducting a stop and search etc, as this will help to identify good practice.
- If you felt the officer did not switch the camera on at the earliest opportunity, when do you believe it would have been a more appropriate time?
- Is the audio and picture quality clear?

Did the officer inform everyone they were being recorded?

- Although the officer may have said they were recording, was this made clear and did the individual(s) in the footage acknowledge this?
- Whilst announcing they were recording, did the officer also explain the nature of the incident?
- If no, when do you feel was the most practical time for the officer to inform everyone at the scene their BWV was switched on?

General Considerations:

- Is the safety of the Officer and members of the Public maintained throughout?
- When interacting with the individual(s), was the officer honest, used correct language, and treated all people fairly and with respect?
- Is the decision-making process of the officer clear and complete?
- Did the officer follow the 'Ethical Policing Principles' (Courage, Respect & Empathy, Public Service)?

Were all parts of GOWISLEY covered? (Stop and Search Only)

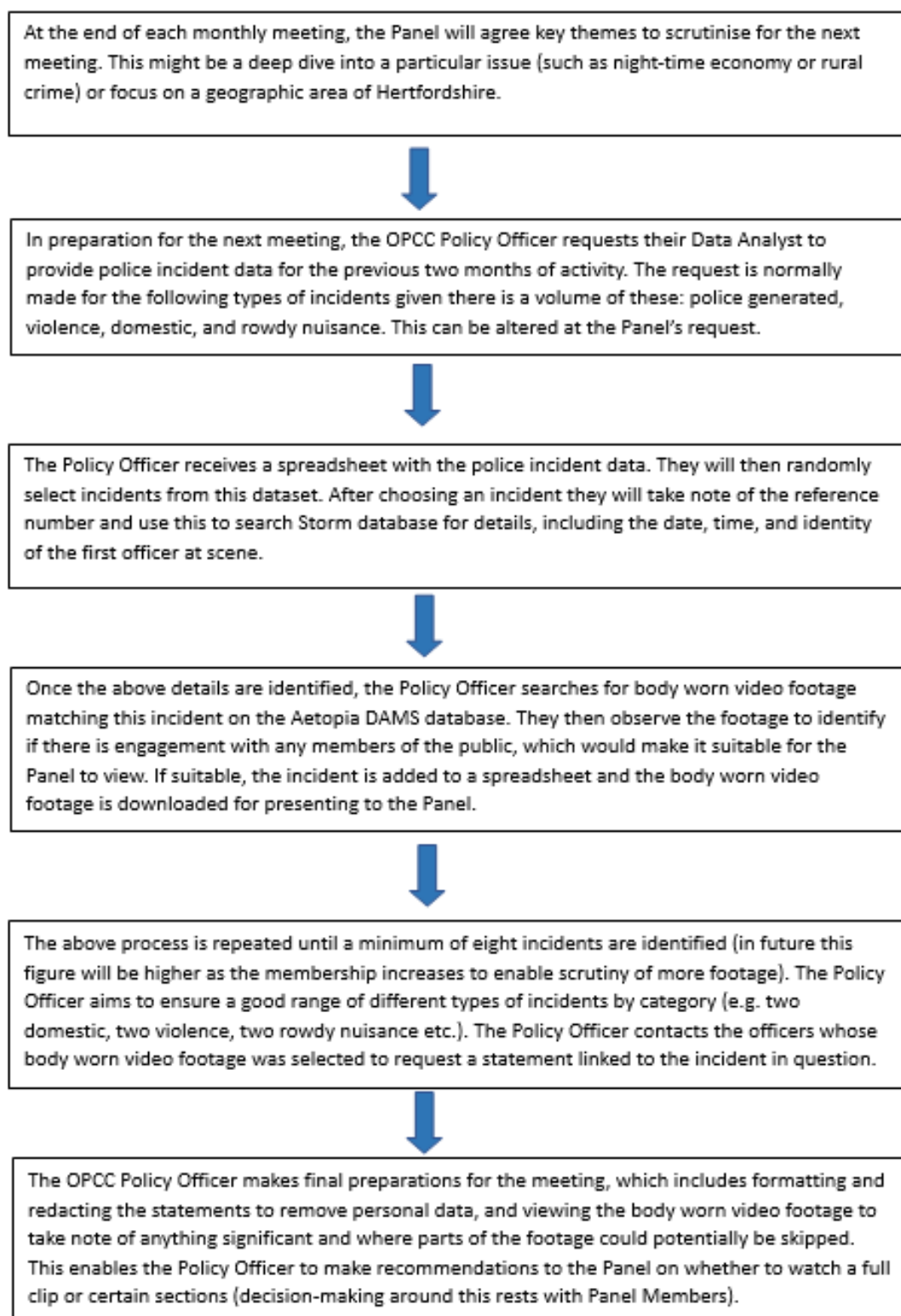
- If no, what parts did the officer not cover?

Appendix B: Panel RAG Grading System

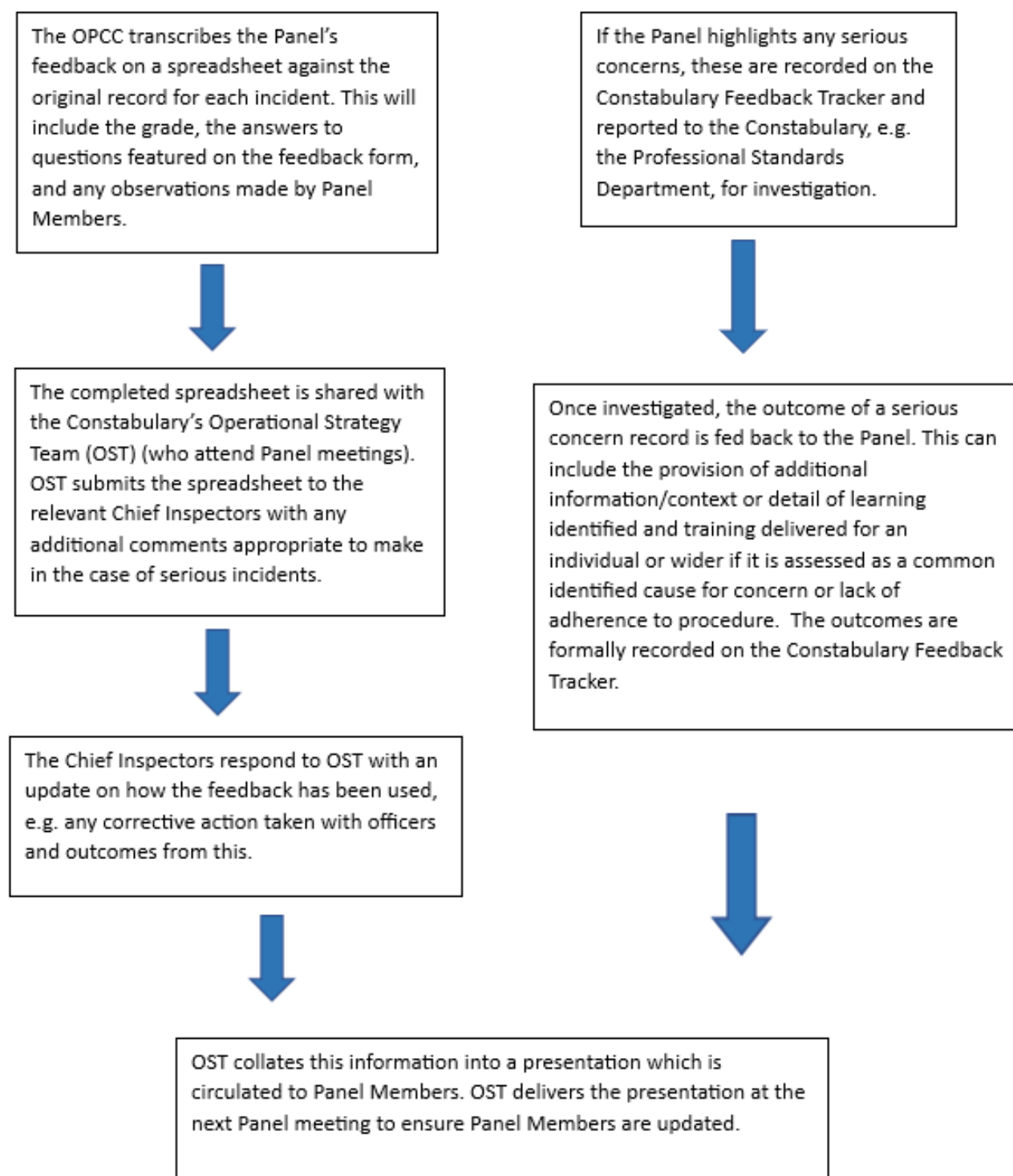
The Panel uses the below system for grading incidents reviewed in meetings.

Green	Appropriate with observation(s) <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Appropriate and consistent with Hertfordshire Constabulary Policies / Standard Operating Procedure.2. Observation that officer did not inform member of the public they are being recorded, otherwise appropriate and consistent with Hertfordshire Constabulary Policies / Standard Operating Procedure.
Amber	Appropriate with observation(s) <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Observations relating to the officers' behaviour or performance.2. Any other observations relating to policy / SOP compliance, or safety.
Red	Inappropriate and inconsistent with policy

Appendix C: Process for selecting BWV incidents for the Panel



Appendix D: Panel Feedback Loop



Glossary of Terms

Terms	Acronym (if applicable)	Description
Body Worn Video	BWV	The cameras which officers wear to capture both video and audio evidence.
Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner	OPCC	The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner helps the Commissioner to discharge their statutory duties and deliver their Police and Crime Plan. Office staff are politically restricted. This includes being a member of a political party.
Red, Amber, Green rating	RAG	Also known as 'traffic lighting,' this rating system is used to summarise indicator values, where green denotes a 'favourable' value, red an 'unfavourable' value and amber a 'neutral' value.
Code of Ethics		The Code of Ethics is a non-statutory guidance framework developed by the College of Policing which outlines ethical policing principles and guidance for ethical and professional behaviour in policing. For more information visit the College of Policing website: Code of Ethics College of Policing
Aetopia DAMS database		Police database containing records of body worn video footage uploaded by officers.
Storm		Police database containing information regarding incidents handled by the police, including call log details (e.g., date and time the incident was reported to Force Communications Room, officers mobilised and attending the scene etc.).
Community Safety Partnership	CSP	Community Safety Partnerships are made up of representatives from the police, Local Authorities, fire and rescue authorities, health and probation services (the 'responsible authorities'). The responsible authorities work together to protect their local communities from crime and to help people feel safer.

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