

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**



**A**

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

will be held in the

**HERTSMERE BOROUGH COUNCIL OFFICES, CIVIC OFFICES,  
ELSTREE WAY, BOREHAMWOOD, WD6 1WA**

On

**THURSDAY, 19TH JUNE, 2025 AT 6.00 PM**

## **Agenda** **Part I**

<b>Item</b>		<b>Page</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>AGENDA AND REPORTS</b> This meeting is administered by Broxbourne Borough Council.  The agenda and reports pack are attached.	(Pages 3 - 116)



**WATFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



**WELWYN**  
**HATFIELD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



## MEETING OF HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Thursday 19 June 2025- 6 PM

Hertsmere Borough Council Offices  
Civic Offices,  
Elstree Way,  
Borehamwood, WD6 1WA

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### AGENDA

- 1 **WELCOME**
- 2 **APPOINTMENT OF THE PCP CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR, REVIEW OF POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITY CO-OPTING ADDITIONAL MEMBERS TO BALANCE**
- 3 **APOLOGIES**
- 4 **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**
- 5 **MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS ON 13 MARCH 2025 AND VISIT TO THE POLICE HEAD QUARTERS ON 10 APRIL 2025 *(to follow)***
- 6 **MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES**
- 7 **QUESTIONS TO THE PANEL FROM THE PUBLIC**  
Questions are to be sent to [pcp@broxbourne.gov.uk](mailto:pcp@broxbourne.gov.uk) by 12 June 2025, seven days in advance of the meeting to allow for a quicker and more complete response. *(20 minutes are permitted)*
- 8 **QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FROM THE PUBLIC**  
Questions are to be sent to [pcp@broxbourne.gov.uk](mailto:pcp@broxbourne.gov.uk) by 12 June 2025, seven days in advance of the meeting to allow for a quicker and more complete response. *(20 minutes are permitted)*
- 9 **POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S BRIEF UPDATE SINCE FEB 2025**
- 10 **POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER ANNUAL REPORT**
- 11 **INDEPENDENT STOP & SEARCH SCRUTINY PANEL ANNUAL REPORT**
- 12 **INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VOLUNTEERS ANNUAL REPORT**
- 13 **AOB**
- 14 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND VENUE TBC**

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# Police & Crime Commissioner FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

## Annual Report 2024/25

# Foreword from the Commissioner



Police & Crime  
Commissioner  
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

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*This annual report covers my first year as Hertfordshire's Police & Crime Commissioner. Over the past twelve months, I've worked tirelessly to be the public's link to policing, to hold the Constabulary to account, and to ensure progress is being made to address the findings of the 2024 PEEL Inspection.*

*I've appointed a new Chief Constable, developed a new Police and Crime Plan setting out our priorities for the years ahead, and brought new transparency and depth to the process of holding the Constabulary to account.*

*To be the public's voice in policing, I've broadened engagement and outreach with communities and businesses and launched the first ever Hertfordshire Youth Commission on Policing and Crime.*

*There's lots still to do, but we've made real progress with increasing the visibility of local policing with initiatives like Operation Hotspot, as well as practical work to tackle retail crime, rural crime, and violence against women and girls.*

*I look forward to delivering on my Police and Crime Plan over the coming years.*

**Jonathan Ash-Edwards**

**Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner**



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# The year in brief



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Commissioner  
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

**It's been a busy year – here are some of the key events and milestones from the past twelve months**

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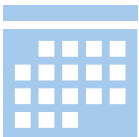
**May 2024** I launched a new £1m county-wide Operation Hotspot project to tackle anti-social behaviour and serious violence. Extra patrols and increased police visibility were focused on 26 specific areas with a history of higher crime and ASB across each of the 10 districts in Hertfordshire.



**June 2024** Violence against women and girls, drug dealing, and shoplifting were all raised when I visited Stevenage. I heard local perspectives on various crime issues in the town and how Operation Vigilant was focused on improving safety for women and girls by using plainclothes officers to patrol the pubs and bars in the evenings.



**July 2024** I held the first of my series of monthly 'Accountability and Performance Meetings' (APMs) online. During the webinar, which was broadcast live to the public, I asked the Chief Constable about how the Constabulary was tackling violence against women and girls, burglary, firearms licensing, and response times on 999 and 101 calls.



**August 2024** I 'busted' the myth that Hertfordshire police won't prosecute shoplifting of goods under £200 - when the then-Chief Constable categorically stated that there was no lower limit for the police to investigate shoplifting during the August APM.



**August 2024**

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# Autumn/Winter 2024



**September 2024**



**September 2024** I joined an undercover night-time operation in Hertford as part of Operation Vigilant, an initiative designed to protect both men and women from predatory behaviour. Specially trained officers in uniform and plainclothes were deployed to bars and pubs to identify people engaging in predatory behaviour.



**October 2024** The HMICFRS inspection of Hertfordshire Constabulary was published. While it identified good practice in some areas, it also identified some in which improvement was needed. Therefore, overseeing performance improvements has been a key part of my focus this year.



**November 2024** I welcomed the deployment of dedicated neighbourhood policing training in Hertfordshire. Our county was one of eleven forces across the country to start piloting the Neighbourhood Policing Pathway scheme developed to instil best practices by the College of Policing.



**December 2024** I appointed my preferred candidate as the new Chief Constable of Hertfordshire Constabulary - Andy Prophet. Mr Prophet was given the strategic objective of strengthening police visibility and local policing.



**December 2024**



**January 2025** I awarded £722,000 to run Beacon victim care centre for a year. The funding – which came from the Ministry of Justice’s Victim Commissioning Fund – was allocated to the operator, Catch22, to run and manage the centre.



**February 2025** My plans to increase funding for policing in the county were unanimously approved. The budget for 2025/26 will result in a new record high number of police officers being achieved: over 2,400 for the first time.



**March 2025** Residents of Chiswell Green, St Albans, were pleased to hear that action will be taken against antisocial driving, illegal car meets, and excessive exhaust noise along the A405, thanks to a new pilot project I have committed to fund from my Road Safety budget. Over the course of the project, acoustic monitoring technology and cameras will be installed to deter illegal and excessively loud vehicles.



**April 2025** I was pleased to be informed by the Chief Constable that the number of homes broken into was down four percent across the county compared with the previous year’s data, and that the police attended over 99% of residential burglaries.



**January 2025**



**April 2025**

# Section 1 - Improving the Service

As PCC, it's my responsibility to secure an effective and efficient police service for the county.

Hertfordshire Constabulary is full of great people proactively fighting crime and keeping the county safe. But there are areas of improvement for the Constabulary, as identified in the 2024 PEEL Inspection.





# 1.1 The PEEL Report

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In October, the Constabulary received the publication of the PEEL (Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy) report following the 2023-2025 inspection. There were many areas for improvement and one area identified as ‘inadequate’: recording data about crime.

There were clearly sections of the report which were a concern and where improvements were needed at pace. I was pleased that the Constabulary took responsibility and acted accordingly in its improvement plans.

I held an extended Accountability and Performance Meeting in November

## Our judgments

Our inspection assessed how good Hertfordshire Constabulary is in ten areas of policing. We make graded judgments in nine of these ten as follows:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Preventing crime	Police powers and public treatment	Responding to the public	Recording data about crime
		Managing offenders	Investigating crime	
		Developing a positive workplace	Protecting vulnerable people	
			Leadership and force management	

with the then-Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable to go through the Inspection Report in detail and scrutinise the Constabulary's improvement plans. I have returned to a number of these areas in subsequent APMs to check progress.



## 1.2 Improvements made since the initial report

**Crime recording and investigation** – the Constabulary was subject to a re-inspection of crime recording in Spring 2025. The final outcome of this is awaited from HMICFRS but is expected to show an improvement in crime recording accuracy of around 10 percentage points, which is significant. This has been achieved by the introduction of a new Crime Hub in the control room which triages all incidents to ensure crime is being correctly reported as well as to undertake some desk-based investigations, reducing pressure on frontline officers.

**Protecting vulnerable people** – I have made improving the use of protective orders and powers a performance objective in the Police and Crime Plan. Good progress has been made to increase the use of Clare's Law (the Domestic Abuse Disclosure Scheme) which the Inspection Report had amongst the lowest utilisation in the country. Since then, the number of Right to Know disclosures has more than quadrupled and the number of Right to Ask disclosures has more than doubled.

**Leadership** – visible leadership has been a priority for the new Chief Constable since taking office and he has undertaken wide ranging 'Chief's Conversation' engagement events with officers and police staff. The Constabulary is introducing new leadership development programmes – Herts Leads (to develop frontline supervisors) and Herts Futures (to develop the leaders of the future) – which have the active support of my office.

# Section 2 - Public Engagement



If I'm to deliver on the priorities I set out in my Police and Crime Plan, and represent the public, having a strategy for pro-actively engaging with the public is of vital importance.

Whether it's by holding open forums to facilitate discussions on certain topics, briefings for elected representatives, or outreach meetings with local councils and schools, I'm constantly working to get out and about and learn what people in Hertfordshire think about policing, crime and community safety.

## 2.1 The Hertfordshire Youth Commission on Policing and Crime



To ensure I and the Constabulary are receiving sufficient input from young people, I commissioned Hertfordshire's first Youth Commission on Policing and Crime. Not-for-profit organisation Leaders Unlocked was granted funding from my commissioning budget to deliver the project, which is due to run from May 2025-January 2026.

Around 25 young people aged between 14-25 have been recruited to the Youth Commission's core group, who will be given the skills, training and guidance needed to engage a wider audience of young people across the county. Leaders Unlocked's stated aim is for the group to reach around 1,000 young people in Hertfordshire over the course of the scheme. The core Youth Commission members will collate this wider audience's views on issues related to policing and crime, while being given the opportunity to take part in a number of visits and activities with the Constabulary.

They will present their findings at a final conference, at which myself and other senior policing figures will be present. I am keen to ensure this project is not merely a 'talking shop' – I want it to lead to constructive and tangible outcomes, and ensure the way our county is policed reflects the views of young people.



**The Hertfordshire Youth Commission on Policing and Crime – delivered by not-for-profit organisation Leaders Unlocked – had its first meeting in May 2025**



## 2.2 Keeping in touch with schools, staff and pupils



It's not just through the Youth Commission that I have been learning about how young people feel about policing and crime – I've worked hard to get out and visit staff and pupils at schools across the length and breadth of Hertfordshire.

Not only am I keen to ensure young people's voices are fed back into policing locally, but Prevention and Children & Young People is my national portfolio as a PCC - so working with young people is an even more pivotal priority.

Recently I've met with the school council at Kings Langley Secondary School in Dacorum, enjoyed a brilliant and very lively Q&A at Pinewood School in Ware, and joined Radlett's Newberries School for the end of their Mini-Police programme.



## 2.3 Getting to know Parish and Town Councils



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Parish and Town councils – the most grassroots level of local government representation – are typically pillars of their respective communities, and conduits for the local community to debate issues big and small.

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There are more than 120 Town and Parish Councils/Meetings (Parish Meetings are smaller Parish Councils, for areas which cover only a small number of residents) across Hertfordshire, and getting to know them is a key priority for me. I've met with clerks, councillors and residents across a wide range of councils and communities in recent months, including Berkhamsted Town Council in Dacorum, Brent Pelham & Meesden Parish Council in East Herts, North Mymms Parish Council in Welwyn Hatfield, and many others.

My objective each time I sit down with a Parish or Town Council is to learn about the key issues in their area, feed their views and perspectives back to the Chief Constable directly, and see what I can do to help with the local issues they face.



**I've learned of the perspectives of Parish and Town councils across all corners of the county, like here in Little Gaddesden in May 2025**

## 2.4 Engaging with retailers and tackling retail crime



**The Retail Crime Forum aims to bring business and the police together to clamp down on crimes that affect retailers**

Retail crime is an issue of high public concern in Hertfordshire. That's why my Police and Crime Plan prioritises working collaboratively with retailers to address retail crime, improving crime prevention, reporting and business confidence.

To help deliver on this priority, I have established a Retail Crime Forum that brings together retailers and partners from across the county to work at pace to tackle shoplifting and wider retail crime.

The Forum, which meets for the first time on 13 June 2025, is the first step in a new collaborative approach bringing together businesses and the Police to agree what more we can do in partnership to tackle retail crime across the entire county.

My focus in the year ahead will be on delivering a partnership plan to improve crime prevention, intervene with prolific shoplifters and strengthen reporting, so that businesses have the confidence to report crime and people feel safe in their place of work.

# Section 3 - Strategic Priorities



As the PCC, I have a number of key statutory responsibilities which are set out in law. These include setting the Police's budget, appointing (and, if necessary, removing) the Chief Constable, and determining how much council tax residents pay towards policing.

## 3.1 Recruiting and appointing a new Chief Constable

In September 2024, Chief Constable Charlie Hall advised me he intended to resign with effect from 31 December 2024. A recruitment exercise was then carried out in accordance with the Home Office and College of Policing guidance. Advice was also requested from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

My aim was to ensure the vacancy was advertised and known as widely as possible to encourage as wide a selection of candidates as possible and to ensure the process was transparent, fair and merit-based. The process went live at the same time as the force's HMICFRS inspection report for 2022/24 was published so candidates could be assessed based on their views and experience of what actions needed to be taken in the light of the findings of the inspection.

As a result of the robust process, five candidates were considered, and two were shortlisted for further assessment. I decided to recommend Andy Prophet, the Deputy Chief Constable of Essex, to the Police and Crime Panel in December as my preferred candidate. The proposal was unanimously approved and Mr Prophet started in role on 1 January 2025.



To support the process, I produced a recruitment pack for prospective candidates

## 3.2 Other strategic priorities

### **Recruitment of a new chief executive**

A new interim Chief Executive of my office was appointed in late 2024 following an open and competitive recruitment process. Rafal Hejne's appointment was unanimously supported by the Police and Crime Panel. I have commissioned Mr Hejne to undertake a review of the office's structure and work, which is underway.

### **Setting the budget and precept for 2025/2026**

The policing budget for 2025/26 faced significant challenges, with an unfunded pay award, the increase in National Insurance contributions not being fully refunded and wider inflationary and demand pressures. Senior officers and I identified £7 million in savings which could be made and I consulted widely on proposals to increase the precept by £14 (Band D) which were supported by 63% of respondents. Hertfordshire continues to have the fifth lowest policing precept in the country. Despite the challenges, the budget supported an increase in police officer numbers to a new record high of 2,405 this year.

## Section 4 - Developing a new Police and Crime Plan



Another of my statutory responsibilities as a PCC is to produce a document setting out my priorities and objectives. This document is called a 'Police and Crime Plan'. The Plan, *Fighting Crime, Making Hertfordshire Safer*, has been formally published following wide ranging public and stakeholder consultation as well as scrutiny by the Police & Crime Panel.

## 4.1 The five priority areas

**The Police and Crime Plan is made up of 5 strategic priority areas:**



**1. Make Hertfordshire safer**



**2. Strengthen Local Policing and Build Public Confidence**



**3. Tackle Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour**



**4. Protect People from Violence, Abuse and Exploitation**



**5. Bring Offenders to Justice and Support Victims**



# Priority Area 1 – Make Hertfordshire Safer



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1. Prevent crime and harm through effective crime prevention initiatives, early intervention and partnership working.
2. Create safer neighbourhoods by taking a hyper-localised crime prevention and reduction approach in areas of Hertfordshire where crime is higher.
3. Relentlessly pursue and make Hertfordshire unwelcoming for the small number of prolific offenders who are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime.

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## Priority Area 2 - Strengthen Local Policing and Build Public Confidence



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1. Increase police visibility and connection with communities to improve public trust and confidence, reduce crime and make communities feel safer.
2. Grow neighbourhood policing and ensure communities have a named police officer or PCSO who they know how to contact.
3. Hotspots of crime and antisocial behaviour are tackled through local patrols and problem solving.

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1. Reduce neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour, making communities feel safer and ensuring an effective police response.
2. Tackle hotspots of burglary and vehicle crime to ensure Hertfordshire's residents feel safe in their own home.
3. Work collaboratively with retailers to address retail crime, improving crime prevention, reporting and business confidence.





## Priority Area 4 - Protect People from Violence, Abuse and Exploitation



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1. Focused work on preventing and disrupting violence against women and girls and domestic abuse will deliver measurable improvements in Hertfordshire.
2. Children and young people are kept safe from sexual and criminal exploitation, abuse and violence.
3. The identification and protection of vulnerable adults from high harm crimes such as fraud, cuckooing and drug-related harm is improved.



1. A more efficient criminal justice system, with improved use of Out of Court Resolutions and effective community remedies to crime where appropriate.
2. Break the cycle of re-offending and prevent re-victimisation, including through the use of perpetrator intervention programmes.
3. Support victims of crime to get justice with timely investigations and updates, and effective support throughout the investigation and court processes.



## 4.2 Strategic Performance Objectives

I am pleased the Constabulary is working to address the findings and recommendations of the HMICFRS PEEL Inspection. The Police and Crime Plan also responds to that report, as well as the 2024/25 performance data.

It is important that the Chief Constable has transparency about how I will assess the Constabulary's performance over the life of the Plan and where I will prioritise holding to account.

The strategic performance objectives are cross-cutting and apply to many of the priority areas in the Plan. My goal is that, over the life of this Plan, Hertfordshire Constabulary is able to achieve the following objectives:

- **Improve Crime Recording**
- **Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour**
  - **Solve more crime**
- **Keep people safe by increasing the use of protective powers**



# 4.3 Final Police and Crime Plan Document

### HERTFORDSHIRE'S COMMUNITY

Hertfordshire is a fast growing and diverse county. Since 2005, the population has grown from 1.05m to 1.21m, a significantly faster rate of growth than England's average. This trend is set to continue with around 100,000 new houses allocated in local plans.

Our largest population is **working age** (16-64), making up 60.1% of the population (2023), or 750,000 individuals. My focus on business and rural crime ensures that those working and contributing to our economy and enterprise are kept safe and protected.

The proportion of **young people** (under 16) has grown to 22.5% of the population (compared to 20.3%). That is why I have established a Youth Commission, to ensure the large community of young people across Hertfordshire have a voice and can help me represent their views. The growing young population shows that youth intervention and support programmes are vital, and I have ensured activity that protects and supports children and young people is central to the Plan.

The proportion of **elderly people** (65+) has expanded rapidly reflecting national trends, particularly in East Hertfordshire and Watford. Hertfordshire's 65+ population has grown from 13.8% of the population in 2003 to 17.4% in 2023. One of my public surveys had a focus on the voice of the 65+ community and road safety came out strongly as a priority, which is reflected in my Plan. Furthermore, an older population calls for enhanced protections against elder targeted crimes such as scams, fraud and abuse.

The latest census tells us that Hertfordshire has become increasingly **ethnically diverse**. Ethnic minority populations have grown from 6% in 2003 to 18% in 2021. This is driven by a mixture of migration and growing second-generation communities, with Asian (9.2%) and Black (4.5%) populations having grown the most.

Hertfordshire is also home to one of the largest and fastest growing Jewish communities in the country. Increasing diversity requires culturally sensitive policing and engagement with diverse communities to preserve

"policing by consent". I want to work with the Chief Constable to recruit a service which reflects the communities we serve, while recognising how crimes affect communities, to ensure we grow trust and confidence in police.

**Urbanisation:** Hertfordshire is England's most densely populated non-urban county. There is a strong variation between towns like Watford and Hemel Hempstead (very urbanised) and East and North Hertfordshire (predominantly rural, 29% and 19% classified rural, respectively). My plan ensures that town centre crime and rural policing are strong strategic priorities to ensure that wherever you live in Hertfordshire, your area is policed effectively.

Throughout my term of office, I will hold the Chief Constable to account for the Constabulary's approach to serving all of Hertfordshire's communities and meeting statutory duties in relation to equality and diversity.

### POLICING HERTFORDSHIRE

Police forces around the country face increasing pressure to address the growing complexities of modern society, balancing resources to respond to emergencies, prevent crime and keep people safe. Residents and businesses are confident that they would receive a good service from police if they needed their help.

Every day, Hertfordshire Police:

- Receive **1469** 999 & 101 calls
- Attend average of **310** incidents
- Attend **56** ASB cases
- Attend **85** Violence Against the Person crimes

In 2025/26 my budget for Hertfordshire Constabulary will support:

- 2,400+** police officers
- 1,600+** police staff
- Almost **150** Special Constables
- 42** police buildings
- 551** fleet vehicles

### PRIORITY 3 TACKLE CRIME & ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Making Hertfordshire's communities safer and protecting the quality of life in the county requires effective action against people behaving criminally or anti-socially in their neighbourhood. The public have told me that anti-social behaviour is the top cause for concern in their neighbourhood, with two thirds of respondents to my survey saying ASB is the main reason for feeling unsafe. Burglary, retail crime and vehicle crime are also concerns of high public concern in Hertfordshire.

**My strategic goals**

1. Reduce neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour, making communities feel safer and ensuring an effective police response.
2. Tackle hotspots of burglary and vehicle crime to ensure Hertfordshire's residents feel safe in their own home.
3. Work collaboratively with retailers to address retail crime, improving crime prevention, reporting and business confidence.

**Why is this a priority in Hertfordshire?**

Hertfordshire is a safe county, but anti-social behaviour and many neighbourhood crime types can cause public concern, especially when hotspots of criminal activity develop.

The safety of local neighbourhoods, people's homes and businesses is of paramount importance to ensure that Hertfordshire continues to thrive. To the communities impacted, there is no such thing as a 'minor' or 'low level' crime and it is important to recognise that such behaviour, repeated over time, can become 'high harm'. This is particularly stark when confronting the myth that officers only investigate sleeping over a value of £200+ something which I have ensured is not the case here in Hertfordshire. No matter the value, I want those businesses to be supported and those criminals to be targeted.

When unchallenged, anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood crime can lead to more serious offending and intervening is crucial to making our streets safer and policing effective.

Crimes like burglary are particularly personal and distressing, impacting people's absolute right to be safe in their own home and an effective response is essential. Hertfordshire Constabulary has a policy to attend every residential burglary, unless declined by the victim, with over 99% compliance and I am keen to see this continue. While burglary is relatively low in Hertfordshire, there is more that can be done to reduce hotspots and catch more burglars.

I want to ensure robust action against those who are committing shop theft at all levels so that businesses have the confidence to report incidents. I will use my convening power as PCC to foster a collaborative approach between businesses, police and the broader criminal justice system to tackle retail crime.

Since my election, I have worked closely with Hertfordshire's farmers and rural communities to understand the issues they face. Having heard concerns about the theft of high value farm equipment and machinery, I am funding the introduction of a trial of DNA forensic marking to reduce farm theft and make it easier for police to return stolen items to their owners.

Hertfordshire is a great place to live and work with real diversity: beautiful countryside and villages, thriving towns, lively night-time economies, close links to London and dynamic business sectors. But this diversity also presents a complex crime picture with different communities affected by different crime types.

Regardless of where you live, work or study in Hertfordshire, I want you to feel safe. Working with Hertfordshire Constabulary and local partners, we will tackle anti-social behaviour and the crime types you have told me are your most important concerns locally.

### POLICING HERTFORDSHIRE

The full Police and Crime Plan document is available for download here:

[www.herts-pcc.gov.uk/plan](http://www.herts-pcc.gov.uk/plan)

# Section 5 - Holding to account



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Holding the Chief Constable and the Constabulary more widely to account is one of the most important functions of a Police and Crime Commissioner. I have a number of statutory and discretionary levers for doing so, which all focus on ensuring the Hertfordshire public is getting a quality service from the Police.



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## 5.1 Accountability and Performance Meetings

PCCs are duty bound to hold Chief Constables to account for how they run their force, as set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. In July 2024, I introduced a new monthly webcast to hold the Chief Constable to account for the performance of Hertfordshire Police, called **Accountability and Performance Meetings**, or APMs. Once a month, I ask the Chief Constable questions relating to performance and topics of high public interest.

The meetings provide the Chief Constable with the opportunity to publicly demonstrate accountability, transparency and value for money over a broad range of police functions and decisions. The meetings will also be used for the Chief Constable to demonstrate progress made against objectives set out in the PCC's Police and Crime Plan. APMs are broadcast live but also recorded and made available for viewing afterwards via YouTube.

Scrutiny topics covered to date have included the Constabulary's response to the PEEL inspection and the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) that explored multi-agency response to children at risk of domestic abuse. In addition, concerns raised by members of the public are often explored, including:

- Firearms licensing •Rural crime •Burglary •Police response to Anti-Social Behaviour
- Responding to people in mental health crisis
- Police powers and use of force •Responding to calls for service
- Investigation, in particular improving outcomes for victims of crime and assessing need
- Police response to stalking and their use of protective orders
- Operation Soteria and the national operating model for rape and serious sexual offences



## 5.2 Scrutiny Panels



The independent Stop and Search, Use of Force and Body-Worn Video (BWV) Scrutiny Panels have continued to play a crucial role in reviewing the use of important but intrusive police powers, supporting me in my statutory duty to hold the Chief Constable to account for the performance of the Constabulary.

The Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel's Annual Report for 2024/25 is published here:

<https://www.herts-pcc.gov.uk/getting-involved/how-to-get-involved/stop-and-search-scrutiny-panel/>





## 5.3 Use of Force Scrutiny Panel

### Green-graded incidents possessed these 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 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.

### Incidents not graded as green possessed these attributes:

- The use of force was not considered proportionate in the circumstances, or the method of force was inappropriate which escalated the situation.
- Poor written statements in which the rationale and justification for using force is missing or unclear, or that did not align with the BWV.
- Unnecessary use of bad language by officers which escalates rather than defuses tensions.
- BWV turned on too late which made it harder to understand the justification for force used.

14,242 use of force records completed in 2024/25, covering 8,974 incidents

12% increase on force records completed from the previous year

14% increase in total incidents from the previous year

82 incidents reviewed and graded by the panel (plus one which was deemed ungradable on grounds of insufficient information)

93% graded as green

6% graded as amber

0% graded as red

1 ungradable



## 5.4 Body-Worn Video Scrutiny Panel

**47 body-worn video incidents scrutinised in  
2024/25**

**52% increase in the volume of incidents  
reviewed compared with the previous year**

**Using similar criteria to that of the Use of Force  
panel, 81% of incidents were graded as green**

**6% graded as amber**

**0% graded as 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 who used good communication and clear decision-making to de-escalate a situation.
- Officers tended not to inform members of the public they were being recorded on BWV, which is a requirement of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).
- Officers were praised for their sensitive handling of situations involving vulnerable members of the public.
- Sometimes officers did not separate involved parties to question them separately, which would have aided information gathering.
- Occasionally, unnecessary bad language used by officers was seen to have encouraged escalation of a situation.

## 5.5 Complaints Resolution Team (CRT)



In Hertfordshire, the complaint resolution process follows the model established by the Policing and Crime Act 2017. The Complaint Resolution Team (CRT) which operates in my office analyses complaint themes and trends, and shares this data with the Constabulary. This information strengthens my ability to hold the Chief Constable to account.



The CRT uses a specialised database which allows for detailed data collection, enabling a deeper understanding of the reasons behind dissatisfaction, identification of shortcomings, and opportunities for individual and organisational improvement.



CRT utilises data to help improve upon HMICFRS recommendations, and has already identified a reduction in victim complaints and improved support and signposting to victims.

- Statistics from the last financial year showed that CRT successfully resolved 74% of all complaints received (1,158 out of 1,562) outside of the formal legislation, with an average time to close of six days.
- CRT has increased levels of public satisfaction by offering quick and effective resolutions alongside meaningful and timely communication.
- Hertfordshire has the best performance times and service delivery statistics nationally compared to other OPCC's carrying out the same model.

# Section 6 - Making Hertfordshire Safer



Making Hertfordshire safer is the first key priority I set out in my Police and Crime Plan – it's one of the most important aspects of my role, and I am using all available avenues to achieve it.

# 6.1 Operation Hotspot



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In 2024, I was successful in bidding for £1m from the Home Office Hotspot Activity Fund for 2024/25.

Hotspots were identified from recorded serious violence and anti-social behaviour, targeting areas with the largest need across the county. This funded a total of 2,903 patrols of hotspots, equating to over 26,000 hours of police time.

During these patrols, officers made 223 arrests, completed 680 stop searches, and utilised ASB powers 1,600 times. In addition, 52 knives were taken off our streets, along with several other weapons seized by officers, making Hertfordshire's streets safer.

I'm pleased to say I've been successful in bidding for a further £1m this year for 2025/26. This hotspot policing initiative aims to increase police visibility in high-footfall areas, and hotspots cover many town centres across the county, delivering public confidence in policing and reassuring business communities.



## 6.2 Strengthening local policing



The Police and Crime Plan sets out our intent to strengthen local policing. In my public consultation last year, more visible patrols were the biggest priority of the public, with 70% saying a visible presence in crime and anti-social behaviour hotspots is what would make them feel safer.

Hertfordshire has a strong local policing model but there are opportunities to strengthen neighbourhood policing and the connection between the police and the public even further. The new Police and Crime Plan will deliver these improvements by working with the Chief Constable to grow the number of police officers in neighbourhood roles and boost the status of neighbourhood policing, while asking the Chief Constable to ensure Neighbourhood Policing Team officers, staff and supervisors have a programme of learning that ensures they are experts in problem solving, community engagement and partnership working.

Freeing up police officer time is also an essential component for ensuring officers have the time and tools needed to be visible in communities.

Over the course of 2025/26, an additional 35 police officers will move into neighbourhood policing teams and an additional 20 PCSOs will be recruited.

## 6.3 Rural Crime - SelectaDNA Project Pilot



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During my first year in office, I have worked closely with Hertfordshire's farmers and rural communities to understand the issues they face. The theft of high value farm equipment and machinery is a key concern in rural parts of the county, and in response I have funded the introduction of a trial of DNA forensic marking to reduce farm theft and make it easier for police to return stolen items to their owners.

This is the first time this technology has been used in Hertfordshire. It is a prime example of how prevention can be used to reduce crime in the first place as forensic marking and signage on farms has a proven deterrent effect.

200 specialist forensic marking kits are being distributed free of charge to businesses in targeted rural locations across the county, helping them safeguard their equipment from burglary and acquisitive crime.

I will monitor the impact of this project over the coming months and continue to work with our local farmers and the police to keep rural areas of Hertfordshire safe.



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# Section 7 - Protecting Vulnerable People



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Working to protect vulnerable people or those at risk of exploitation is a key priority for me as PCC.

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# 7.1 Clare's Law

Clare's Law, also known as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, provides a right to ask the Police about any previous history of violence or abuse that a partner might have. It also offers the "right to know," giving police and other agencies a duty to inform someone whose partner has previously committed violence which could pose a risk.

In the 2023/25 PEEL inspection, HMICFRS identified that Hertfordshire Constabulary received the lowest rate of Domestic Violence Right to Know / Ask applications in England and Wales. Furthermore, the speed at which applications were processed needed attention and increased resource.

In the November 2024 Accountability and Performance Meeting, I asked the then-Chief Constable Charlie Hall to explain to the public what he was doing to address the concerns raised by HMICFRS.

Over the past year, practice change in the Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit means there is now the expertise and resource to manage applications under Clare's Law. This has led to substantial improvements as described in the table on the right. These figures suggest that the changes implemented in the Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit have had a substantial impact on applications and in terms of the percentage that now lead to disclosure.

Category	2023/24	2024/25	% Increase
Right to Know	89	474	+432%
Right to Know Disclosure	19	217	
Right to Ask	445	903	+103%
Right to Ask Disclosure	104	415	

## 7.2 Clear, Hold, Build (County Lines)



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The Clear, Hold, Build (CHB) initiative has now been running in Hertfordshire since 2022 and is helping to transform the lives of people whose communities have been affected by serious and organised crime. CHB aims to help communities blighted by drugs, gangs and violence by making them less attractive to criminals, whilst at the same time building up the local community by providing enhanced support from local agencies.

The first initiative of this kind was piloted in Stevenage, under the name 'Build a Better Bedwell', a name chosen by local schoolchildren. In the Bedwell area of Stevenage, I allocated £854,000 of Home Office funding to support the 'build' phase, which focuses on long-term community regeneration and crime prevention. This funding enabled the installation of safety measures like CCTV and secure entry systems and supported community-led projects aimed at improving local residents' quality of life.

Prior to this work, the Constabulary's 'Clear' phase led to fifty-three arrests and the dismantlement of seventeen county lines.



# Section 8 - Criminal Justice Board



Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) were introduced by the government in 2003 to drive collaborative improvements across the criminal justice system and improve public confidence. As PCC, I chair Hertfordshire's Criminal Justice Board.

CJBs aim to work with PCCs and the police to provide the public with an efficient and effective criminal justice system.

## 8.1 Publication of the new Hertfordshire Criminal Justice Board Strategy 2025-27

Members of the Hertfordshire Criminal Justice Board (HCJB) met in September 2024 to discuss priorities for the next two years. The Board brings together senior leaders from across the criminal justice system to support local co-ordination. The new strategy was agreed in December 2024 and focuses on four priorities:

- Targeting inefficiencies at organisational touchpoints.
- Ensuring victims of high harm crimes are supported through the criminal justice system according to their needs and wishes.
- Promoting and developing interventions and preventative justice outcomes.
- Ensuring those involved in the criminal justice system can access quality rehabilitation services.

The strategy is strongly aligned with partner priorities and the new Police and Crime Plan 2025-29. The structure of the Board was also reviewed and streamlined to support the delivery of the strategy.

### **Fairness in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) Project**

Commissioned by the HCJB under my predecessor, this research project investigates issues of fairness and disproportionality across Police Custody, Probation, and Youth Justice within Hertfordshire.

The research has included surveys, focus groups, and interviews to understand the experiences of those involved in the criminal justice system. The final report is due to be published in November 2025 and will include recommendations to promote fairness across the CJS.

# Section 9 - Finance and grant delivery



Policing in Hertfordshire will spend over £310 million in 2025/26. I am committed to ensuring that public money is used effectively and provides value for money.



## 9.1 A Challenging Financial Year

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The 2024/25 financial year proved to be a challenging one, concluding with an overspend of £3.0 million, representing 1.12% of the net budget. This was primarily driven by the financial year beginning with a higher police officer headcount than had been budgeted. Police officer pay therefore incurred an overspend of £2.7 million, and overtime levels significantly exceeded the budget by £1.6 million.

These pressures were partially mitigated by non-pay underspends of £1.4 million, notably in capital financing, and a £0.7 million underspend in my budget. Nevertheless, this has led to a reduction in usable reserves to £13.4 million, now standing at 4.3% of the budget. Looking ahead, the 2025/26 budget incorporates an ambitious £7.2 million savings target. I am closely monitoring the situation with increased reporting to ensure the Constabulary's senior officer team takes swift remedial action to operate within the allocated budget.

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## 9.2 Community Safety Fund (small grants scheme)

I was pleased to award almost £50,000 towards local community groups, charities, and community safety partnerships to tackle crime and support victims at a local level. I awarded funding to sports intervention/prevention projects that seek to protect vulnerable young people and reduce antisocial behaviour including boxing in Watford, basketball in Broxbourne, and a multisport project in Welwyn Hatfield.

An award was also made to pilot a project supporting the South Asian Community impacted by targeted theft of jewellery across Hertfordshire. I also sought to tackle Violence Against Women & Girls and Domestic Abuse (DA) by awarding funding towards an early intervention project targeting vulnerable young girls in Broxbourne and trauma-informed courses for women impacted by DA in Dacorum.

Another key function of a PCC is to commission services which support victims of a variety of crime types.





## 10.1 The Chrysalis Centre

Following a successful bid into the Home Office Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Fund 2023-25, the Chrysalis Centre was established in the summer of 2023 as an innovative approach to domestic abuse perpetrator interventions.

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The programme aims to tackle the root causes of domestic abuse, breaking the cycle of abuse and making victims, families, and communities safer.

In 2024/25, the Chrysalis Centre received over 700 referrals from over 40 referral sources, including self-referrals. It also hosted the inaugural Chrysalis Centre conference on 'Leading Transformational and Cultural Change', which brought together professionals from across the sector to learn about the programme, including the research and evidence that underpins the approach and best practice for engaging with perpetrators.





## 10.2 Other services commissioned

In the 2024-25 financial year, I funded several essential services to provide support to victims of crime to help them cope and recover from their ordeal.

These include:

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i. Beacon Victim Care Centre provided by Catch 22 valued at £705,653. This covers 22.5 FTE staff who support for adult and child victims of any crime type.

ii. Herts countywide IDVA service provided by Refuge valued at £239,742.

iii. Hertfordshire ISVA service provided by One YMCA valued at £658,863 with 9x FTE ISVAs and 3x ISVA/IDVAs.

iv. Hospital-based ISVA / IDVA service provided by Herts NHS Trusts valued at £293,442 with a staff structure of 7x FTE ISVAs/IDVAs.

v. Herts ISAC service provided by Safer Places valued at £98,350 with 3x FTE ISACs staff.

vi. Beacon CYP and Family Hub provided by Catch 22 at a value of £110,856. The service consisted of 3x FTE specialist case workers.

vii. Beacon ASB project provided by C22 at a value of £38k. The ASB support service consisted of 1x FTE case worker.

viii. A DA advocate and outreach and SV counselling service provided by Watford Women's Centre Plus valued at £40,000 with 0.5 FTE outreach worker.

ix. Beacon Safeguarding Hub provided by the Victim Support Team based in DAISU at a value of £36,250 with 1.3x FTE staff in a larger team who support victims of standard and medium risk domestic abuse.

**FTE:** Full-time equivalent / **IDVA:** Independent Domestic Violence Advocate / **ISVA:** Independent Sexual Violence Advocacy / **ISAC:** Independent Stalking Advocate Caseworker / **CYP:** Children and Young People / **DAISU:** Domestic Abuse Investigation and Safeguarding Unit

The Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) is set by the Home Secretary to identify national threats which policing must address. Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables must have regard to the SPR.

The SPR is reflected in the new Police and Crime Plan and I hold the Chief Constable to account for the Constabulary's performance in these areas.

Governance is also provided across the Eastern Region collaboration of PCCs and Chief Constables.

In the autumn, I visited ERSOU (the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit) which leads on serious organised crime and counter terrorism for the region, to understand more about their work.

## **The key areas are:**

- Violence Against Women and Girls
- Terrorism
- Serious and Organised Crime
  - National Cyber Incident
  - Child Sexual Abuse
  - Public Disorder
  - Civil Emergencies

- **May 2025:** Second year of Operation Hotspot begins, focussing on crime hotspot areas across Hertfordshire
- **June 2025:** Retail Crime Forum
- **Summer 2025:** town centres will all have named officers, outreach days and focused crime prevention and reduction over the summer
- **Summer to Autumn 2025:** Launch of new prevention panel to address youth violence across Hertfordshire
- **January 2026:** Youth Commission final conference

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# **Hertfordshire Independent Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel**

**Annual Report 2024/25**



**Police & Crime  
Commissioner**  
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

## Chair's Foreword



It is my pleasure to present the Hertfordshire Independent Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel's Annual Report for 2024/25 to the people of Hertfordshire. As Chair, I am proud to lead a group of volunteers who give their time, experience, and commitment to help ensure that stop and search powers are used proportionately, fairly, and transparently.

What's important to emphasise is that Panel members are not experts or officials — they are ordinary members of the public, just like you. They bring diverse lived experiences and perspectives, and this is what gives our scrutiny its value and strength. Independent public oversight matters — and our work ensures that policing in Hertfordshire is subject to genuine and meaningful accountability from the communities it serves.

For everyone who lives, works or studies in Hertfordshire, effective and fair policing is an essential aspect of our daily lives. Stop and search is a powerful and sometimes intrusive policing tool. When used appropriately, it can be effective in tackling crime and making communities safer. But its legitimacy depends on transparency and trust — and public confidence grows when there is clear, independent oversight.

Our Panel plays a vital role in that oversight. By reviewing stop and search records and body worn video (BWV), we highlight examples of good practice, identify where improvements are needed, and feed that learning back to Hertfordshire Constabulary. Thanks to strong feedback loops between the Panel and the Constabulary, our scrutiny continues to shape policy, improve officer training, and raise professional standards. The Hertfordshire Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel is recognised as an innovative example of effective community oversight, praised by HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services) for enhancing transparency, informing police training, and building public confidence in policing practices.

Since its inception 11 years ago, the Panel has reviewed nearly 4,000 stop and search records. We have built a structured and consistent framework that ensures our feedback is timely, detailed, and acted upon. We have seen continued improvement in the quality of written records submitted by officers and have significantly increased the volume of BWV reviewed — something I intend to build on further in the year ahead.

We have also worked hard this year to improve engagement with young people and underrepresented communities. From delivering mock panel sessions in educational settings to strengthening links with the Constabulary's Race Inclusion Board and the Young People's Forum, we are actively involving more local people — particularly young Black residents — in the scrutiny process. This is making a meaningful difference.

However, I continue to find, as I go around the county and engage with local communities, that this independent public scrutiny remains one of Hertfordshire's best-kept secrets. Too few people are aware that this work is happening, or that they can get involved. That must change.

We need to do much more to increase visibility, public understanding, and participation. We have an engagement strategy in place, but the time has come to move from plans to measurable outcomes. We need to use every tool available — including social media, partnerships, and

community outreach — to raise awareness, create dialogue, and give the public greater opportunity to question and understand the work we do. I want to see real evidence over the coming year that these efforts are translating into greater reach and impact.

That also means addressing barriers to participation. We're trialling hybrid meetings with evening start times this year to make it easier for younger people and those with work or study commitments to take part. We're also reviewing our communications approach and will be working with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to ensure it delivers real, sustained progress in recruitment and engagement.

A reminder to readers: our meetings are open to members of the public who wish to attend as guest observers. If you're curious, concerned, or just want to understand more, you are welcome to attend. Details are available through the OPCC.

I want to thank the OPCC staff for their continued logistical and advisory support, and my fellow Panel volunteers for their tireless commitment to fairness, accountability, and public service. I offer special thanks to Vice Chair Mohammed Islam-Ruman for his steady leadership and insight, and to Ben Platt and Eddie McCarroll for their stewardship of the Panel's data subgroup, which has elevated the use of data in our scrutiny process.

Finally, I express my appreciation to Hertfordshire Constabulary for their professionalism and openness in engaging with the Panel's work. Our ability to provide effective, independent scrutiny depends on the strength and transparency of that working relationship.

As Chair, I remain committed to making our work more visible, more inclusive, and more impactful — so that every resident in Hertfordshire understands how their voice contributes to fair and accountable policing.

**Demitrius Nurse**

**Chair of the Hertfordshire Independent Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel**

## **Police and Crime Commissioner's Foreword**



Stop and search is an important tactic for police officers to disrupt crime, take drugs and weapons off our streets and keep the public safe.

It is an intrusive power and must be used in a justified, proportionate and lawful manner.

External scrutiny has an important role to play in demonstrating to the public that these powers are being used appropriately, and the Panel plays a valuable role in helping police officers feel confident in using their powers when justified.

The Panel supports me to deliver on my statutory duty to hold the Chief Constable to account for the performance of the Constabulary.

The Stop and Search Panel is a long-established part of the external scrutiny framework, and I am pleased to see through its work in 2024/25 the Panel remains confident that stop and search powers are used by Hertfordshire officers in an appropriate, proportionate, and ethical way. Everyone in Hertfordshire should be reassured by the fact the Panel's position of confidence in records scrutinised was 83.2% (an increase on 74.9% in the previous year).

I am pleased to see that the strong working relationship between the Panel and Hertfordshire Constabulary has continued to evolve over the past year. A record number of frontline officers participated in Panel meetings, giving them an insight into how members of the public view stop and search powers and in turn providing Panel members with expert operational advice to inform their scrutiny work. The Panel has an established feedback mechanism with the Constabulary which means that its scrutiny reinforces good practice and, where a need for improvement is identified, informs Constabulary policy, process and training.

The strength of the Panel-Constabulary relationship was highlighted in the HMICFRS PEEL Inspection report published in October 2024, which stated that the Constabulary invites external challenge through independent scrutiny panels and gives the panels a strong voice through representation on the Police Powers Board, the Constabulary's strategic board on police powers.

I am very grateful to all panel members for the time and effort they commit to the important work of the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel. I look forward to working with its members in the year ahead as the Panel continues to support 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 overseeing how police officers in Hertfordshire use their stop and search powers, it is fantastic to see positive partnership working between the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel and the Constabulary continue to build over the last 12 months.

Stop and search is an important power - it takes weapons off the street, tackles crime and keeps the people of Hertfordshire safe. But we know that the police haven't always used this power fairly or appropriately, which risks undermining its use and its legitimacy with the public - particularly where we use stop and search disproportionately and without explanation.

I am confident that in the vast majority of cases we use our stop and search powers properly, and that officers are fair, respectful and can justify their actions. Our sergeants review every stop and search record and look at a high proportion of body-worn video to provide us with this confidence. I am pleased to see that over the past 12 months we have improved positive outcome and positive arrest rates for stop and search, indicating that our use of the power is more targeted.

However we cannot simply self-review our performance. This is why the work of the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel is so important. It provides crucial independent oversight to ensure that officers are complying with the law and policy, treating people with dignity and respect and are using their powers appropriately.

It is encouraging, therefore, to see that the panel remain broadly confident in our use of the power from the searches and body worn video that they have reviewed. Where there are concerns identified, we work with the panel and officers and the supervisors identified to improve their performance and amend training, policy and process where necessary.

As with previous years, I have continued to encourage frontline officers and supervisors to attend panel meetings. This not only allows the panel to gain an operational perspective on matters but also provides transparency and ensures that officers understand the role that the panel play and can share this information with their peers.

I am pleased that the panel chair and vice-chair continue to attend Police Powers Board which is where strategic decisions on police powers are made. Having this representation ensures that the panel's voice is heard and they are able to contribute to improving our approach to stop and search.

Thank you very much to all of those involved in making the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel a success. I'm sincerely grateful that the Constabulary has a committed group of volunteers to act as critical friends and help hold us to account. I'm looking forward to continuing to work with the panel over the next 12 months.

**Chief Superintendent Jon Simpson**

**Chair of Hertfordshire Constabulary's Police Powers Board**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Key findings

- This year (2024/25), Hertfordshire Constabulary conducted 6,427 stop and searches – this is a 3% decrease on the previous year. As reflected in past annual reports, this is part of a general historical downward trend in volumes of stop and search through improved intelligence-led stops. This year, 1,364 (21.2%) of searches resulted in an arrest – this is a 1.8% increase in the arrest rate on the previous year (and the highest stop-to-arrest ratio at any point in the last decade).
- The countywide positive outcome rate for stop and searches this year was 38% - an increase of 3% on the previous year.
- Eight Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) saw improvements in positive outcome rates compared to last year (including St Albans and North Herts, both of which observed small decreases in positive outcome rates in the previous reporting period). Three Rivers and Welwyn Hatfield observed small decreases in positive outcome rates (of 4.4% and 2.2% respectively).
- This year, Hertsmere had the highest positive outcome rate of all CSPs with 47% (compared to Welwyn Hatfield last year with 43%).
- 496 dip-sampled stop and search records were scrutinised by the Panel this year. This represents 8.71% of all available records, which is an improvement on last year (6.8%). It also represents a 14.5% increase in the number of records scrutinised by the Panel on the previous year.
- The Panel's position of confidence (i.e. records graded 'Green') in records scrutinised was 83.2% (an increase on 74.9% in 2023/24 and 66.1% in 2022/23).

### Key achievements

- The Panel has continued to deliver on its core scrutiny role, supporting the Police and Crime Commissioner in his holding to account duty and increasing the proportion of total stops scrutinised this year on last.
- The Panel has reviewed 41 pieces of Body Worn Video (BWV) footage during the year (compared to 32 last year).<sup>1</sup> It has reviewed all under 18 strip searches, in line with the recommendation made by the Children's Commissioner for England.<sup>2</sup>
- The Panel has continued to improve how it uses data and trends in data to identify themes and areas for scrutiny and enhance its understanding of how stop and search powers are used across the county, including on the vital issue of disproportionality.
- Panel members have assisted the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) in developing a cross-scrutiny panel communications and engagement strategy supporting ongoing efforts to raise public awareness of scrutiny of police powers and increase the diversity of panel memberships by age and ethnicity.

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<sup>1</sup> Body Worn Video (BWV) is camera footage that refers to video captured by cameras worn by police officers and Special Constables.

<sup>2</sup> <https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2023/03/cc-strip-search-of-children-in-england-and-wales.pdf>

- As part of this work, Panel members have supported the OPCC in delivering a programme of 'mock panel' sessions in which OPCC staff and Panel members visit universities, colleges and schools to recreate the scrutiny process with groups of students by reviewing stop and search records and stop and search and use of force BWV. Through this ongoing programme, Panel members have helped reach over 200 young people in Hertfordshire.
- The OPCC has continued to strengthen its level of engagement with the Constabulary's Race Inclusion Board (RIB), which scrutinises the Constabulary's implementation of the Police Race Action Plan. Through this work, two RIB members have been recruited as OPCC scrutiny panel members.
- The OPCC and Stop and Search Panel have established a strong working relationship with the RIB Young People Forum, providing written records to the Forum for its members to review. The feedback from Forum members is relayed back to the Panel and to Constabulary officers, thus establishing a formal feedback loop. This arrangement now means that around 50 Black young people from across Hertfordshire are contributing to scrutiny of use of stop and search powers in the county.
- Panel members have taken up a multitude of training and wider learning opportunities throughout the year, including refresher training, observation of police officer training, and 'Ride Alongs' with the Constabulary.
- Panel meetings have continued to be hosted at different external locations, helping to build positive working relationships with partner organisations and facilitate attendance and participation in meetings by Neighbourhood Policing Teams from across the county.
- A total of 58 Officers – 2 Chief Inspectors, 1 Inspector, 14 Sergeants and 41 Police Constables – have observed Panel meetings over the course of the year (compared to 40 last 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 valuable operational advice in support of the Panel's scrutiny work.

### **Recommendations for the year ahead (April 2025 – March 2026)**

- Continue to evolve the more data-influenced approach to scrutiny work now undertaken by the Panel, making more sophisticated use of PowerBI to understand trends and anomalies and identify issues requiring further investigation – and tracking progress over time.
- Continue to develop and implement the cross-panel communications and engagement strategy to increase community awareness of and involvement in scrutiny work, and diversity of panel membership by ethnicity, age and lived experience of police activity.
- Identify further ways to remove potential barriers to Panel membership for those in full-time work or study. Plans are now in place to trial evening and hybrid Panel meetings in the immediate term.
- Continue to increase the sample size of BWV scrutinised at meetings as a proportion of its wider scrutiny work, reflecting the value of BWV in enabling effective scrutiny.

## 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**, delivering vital independent scrutiny of use of stop and search powers by police officers in Hertfordshire.
- **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 minority ethnic communities to maximise diversity of thought and experience on the Panel.

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](mailto: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 2024 and 31 March 2025.<sup>3</sup>

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, stop and search data, BWV, Section 60 authorisations, and under 18 strip searches.<sup>4</sup> 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 2023/24 has increased slightly from 6,617 to 6,636.<sup>5</sup>

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

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<sup>3</sup> During the reporting period, the Panel met to review the preceding period's stop and search activity. Therefore, this report covers the Constabulary's stop and search activity from 1 March 2024 to 28 February 2025.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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 March 2025 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 1,215,387. 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: 68.5 crimes per 1,000 residents compared to 80.8 in England (March 2024 – February 2025). However, levels of antisocial behaviour incidents are higher: 18.7 per 1,000 residents compared to 14.9 in England (March 2024 – February 2025).

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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

In 2016, the College of Policing published its Authorised Policing Practice (APP) for Stop and Search.<sup>8</sup> 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. The Constabulary approached the OPCC to establish an external independent scrutiny panel and, 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 again reflected in the most recent HMICFRS Peel Inspection, published in October 2024, which found that Hertfordshire Constabulary has effective independent panels that scrutinise the Constabulary's use of stop and search.<sup>9</sup> 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."<sup>10</sup>

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 Scrutiny Panels and OPCC staff. The Constabulary's Race Inclusion Board meets with senior

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> [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)

<sup>8</sup> [Stop and search | College of Policing](https://www.collegeofpolicing.org.uk/stop-and-search)

<sup>9</sup> PEEL 2021/22 An Inspection of Hertfordshire Constabulary, HMICFRS, p.10  
<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/peel-assessment-2021-22-hertfordshire/>

<sup>10</sup> [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/123456/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)

officers and members of Black communities in Hertfordshire to oversee different areas of work around race and inclusion, chiefly around implementation of the Police Race Action Plan. 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 comprehensive approach to scrutiny of use of police powers including stop and search.

### 3. Panel Membership and Leadership

The Panel's work has continued to benefit from consistency in leadership and membership this year. Demetrius Nurse has served as Chair of the Panel for two years, with Mohammad Islam-Ruman as Vice Chair. Ben Platt and Eddie McCarroll have led the work of the Panel's data subgroup, strengthening the role that data now plays in the wider Panel's scrutiny work.

As of May 2025, the Panel has a total membership of 21 members, all of whom live, work or study in Hertfordshire. Over the course of the year, three members have left the Panel and two new members have joined.

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

The Panel's diversity by ethnicity has improved on last year but there is more progress to be made:

Category	Panel	2021 Census <sup>11</sup>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	33.3%	51%
Male	66.7%	49%
<b>Age</b>		
16 – 24	4.8%	9.4%
25 – 39	0%	19.9%
40 – 54	19%	21.3%
55 – 70	38.1%	17.2%
70+	38.1%	12.5%
<b>Self-defined Ethnicity</b>		
White	76.2%	81.8%
Asian/Asian British	4.8%	8.6%
Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	9.5%	3.8%
Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African	9.5%	3.7%
Other Ethnic Group	0%	2.1%

### 4. External Engagement and Recruitment

Panel members have assisted the OPCC in developing a cross-scrutiny panel communications and engagement strategy supporting efforts to raise public awareness of scrutiny of police powers and

<sup>11</sup> ONS Census 2021 Hertfordshire: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/areas/E10000015/>

increase the diversity of panel memberships by age and ethnicity. This means that the panels now have defined targets and an action plan to help deliver them.

The strategy is ambitious in its breadth and the OPCC has so far focused on prioritising the following strands of activity:

- Panel members have supported the OPCC in delivering a programme of ‘mock panel’ sessions in which OPCC staff and Panel members visit universities and colleges and recreate the scrutiny process with groups of students by reviewing stop and search records and stop and search and use of force BWV. Through this ongoing programme, Panel members have helped raise awareness and undertaken police scrutiny work with over 200 young people in Hertfordshire. Feedback has been incredibly positive to the extent that the University of Hertfordshire and West Herts College have now embedded mock panels in their student programmes. Mock panel sessions will be rolled out to additional colleges and schools, and plans are already in place to deliver a series of sessions with Hertford Regional College at its campuses in Broxbourne and Ware and with North Hertfordshire College later in 2025.
- The OPCC has continued to strengthen its level of engagement with the Constabulary’s RIB, which scrutinises the Constabulary’s implementation of the Police Race Action Plan. Through this work, two RIB members have been recruited as OPCC scrutiny panel members.
- The OPCC and Stop and Search Panel have also established a strong working relationship with the RIB Young People Forum, providing written records to the Forum for its members to review. The feedback from Forum members is relayed back to the Panel and to Constabulary officers, thus establishing a formal feedback loop. This arrangement now means that around 50 Black young people from across Hertfordshire are contributing to scrutiny of use of stop and search powers in the county – this is a significant step forward.
- The Panel and OPCC continue to identify ad hoc opportunities to raise awareness of and diversity of participation in scrutiny. In September 2024, the Panel Chair joined a Black History Month Community Event in Watford, helping to raise awareness of the work of the Panel with dozens of attendees. In February 2025, members of the OPCC team took part in a careers fair at the University of Hertfordshire which resulted in a small cohort of students attending a series of Panel meetings as observers.

With Panel support, the OPCC will continue evolving and implementing the strategy. Progress has been made this year but there is still much to do.



*Panel Chair Demitrius Nurse with fellow Panel Member Bukola Efunshile at a Black History Month Community Event in Watford in September 2024*

## 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 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. This year, nine members across the scrutiny panels have taken up the opportunity of a Ride Along.

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 October 2024, Panel members were given the opportunity to observe officer training and, in May 2024, were provided with a briefing on unconscious bias training. 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.

Later this year, the Operational Strategy Team that oversees the use of police powers for Hertfordshire Constabulary are providing a training input to all intervention and neighbourhood policing colleagues. Panel members have been invited to observe these sessions to further their understanding of training received by frontline officers.

### **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 and these are published on the OPCC website.<sup>12</sup>

A Superintendent, Chief Inspector, Inspector and Sergeant (or combination thereof) from the Operational Strategy Team is present at all meetings to support 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 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

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<sup>12</sup> [ss-panel-terms-of-reference-oct-23-2024.pdf \(hertscommissioner.org\)](https://www.hertscommissioner.org/ss-panel-terms-of-reference-oct-23-2024.pdf)

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.

During the reporting period, the Panel decided to invert its standard meeting agenda and begin its scrutiny work at the very start of the meeting. Standing updates and items for discussion are now delivered post-scrutiny, which crucially frees up time for frontline officers attending Panel meetings by allowing them to depart the meeting once the scrutiny is complete. This change has had a positive impact and will be implemented on a permanent basis across the scrutiny panels.

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 scrutinise 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).<sup>13</sup>

The Panel welcomes opportunities to take on new and ad hoc elements of scrutiny. During the reporting period, the Panel reviewed and graded a series of stop and search records to assist the Constabulary in formulating its response to the HMICFRS inspection report published in October 2024. This input was very welcome. The Constabulary also updated its Standard Operating Procedure on stop and search this year and members were given the opportunity to review and inform changes to the policy.



*Panel members meeting in October 2024, with Police and Crime Commissioner Jonathan Ash-Edwards in attendance*

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	
May 2024: North Herts	October 2024: 0-17 year olds
July 2024: 'Not stated' ethnicity	November 2024: 0-17 year olds
August 2024: 'Not stated' ethnicity	March 2025: Broxbourne
September 2024: 'Not stated' ethnicity	

<sup>13</sup> [Strip search of children in England and Wales | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](#)

The 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). 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. 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.<sup>14</sup>

During this reporting period, Hertfordshire Constabulary conducted 6,427 searches - a decrease of 3% on the previous year. 1,364 (21.2%) of these searches resulted in an arrest - a 1.8% increase in the arrest rate on the previous year. Hertfordshire is fifth out of eight forces in terms of the average monthly number of stop and searches conducted within their Most Similar Force area (the same as 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 average monthly number of stop and searches conducted over the last year.

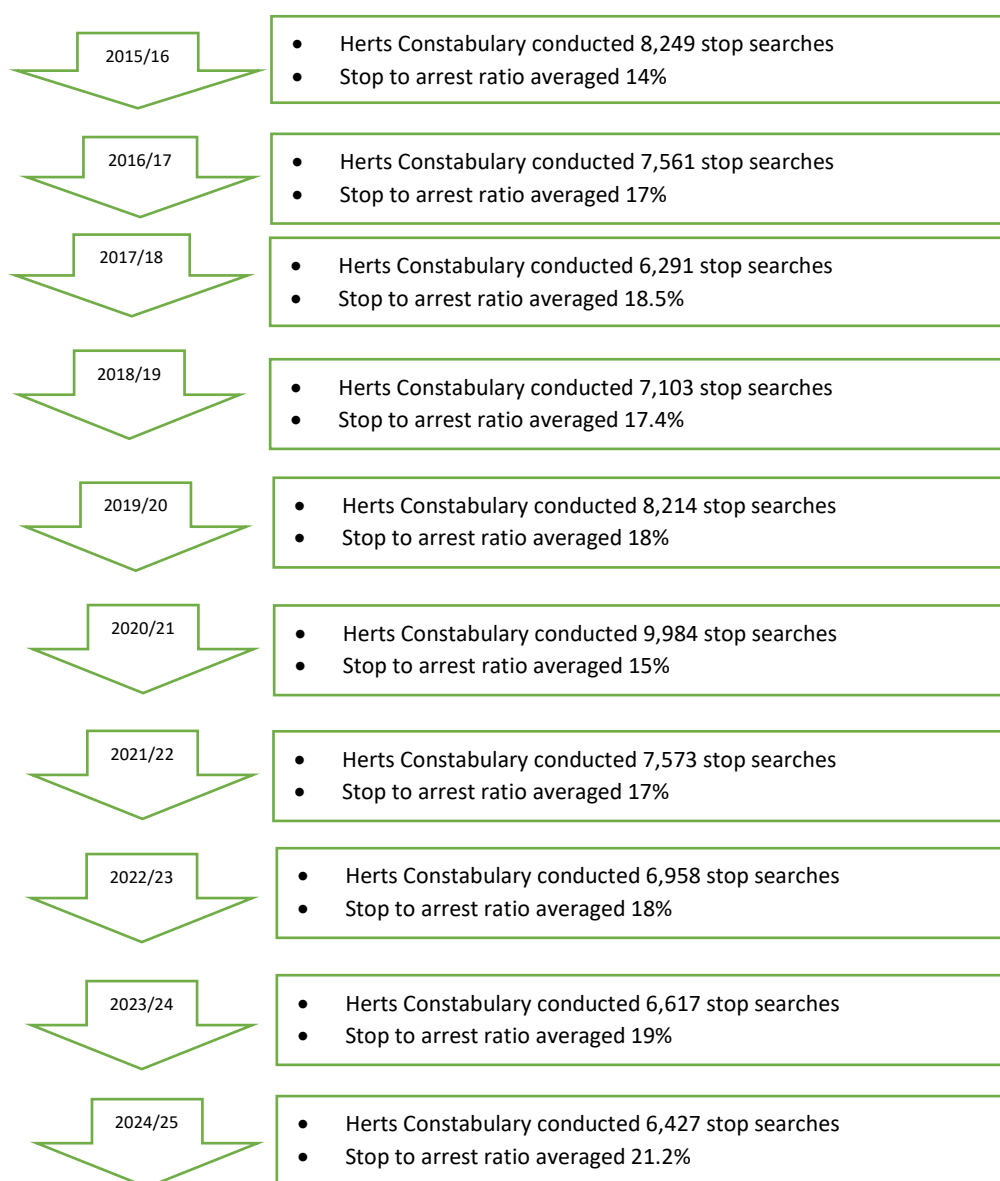
Within the Most Similar Force Group, Staffordshire and Sussex have comparable numbers of average monthly stops (536 in Staffordshire and 516 in Sussex compared to Hertfordshire's 532). However, Sussex has a better arrest rate (22.9%) than Hertfordshire (14.9%).

For more information, see Appendix A: Comparison of Stop and Searches figures from Hertfordshire and Most Similar Force areas (March 2024 – March 2025)

*\*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/data-his-majestys-inspectorate-of-constabulary-and-fire-rescue-services/)*

<sup>14</sup> For 2023/24, 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 (2015/16 - 2024/25)



(source: PowerBI, accessed 25<sup>th</sup> April 2025)

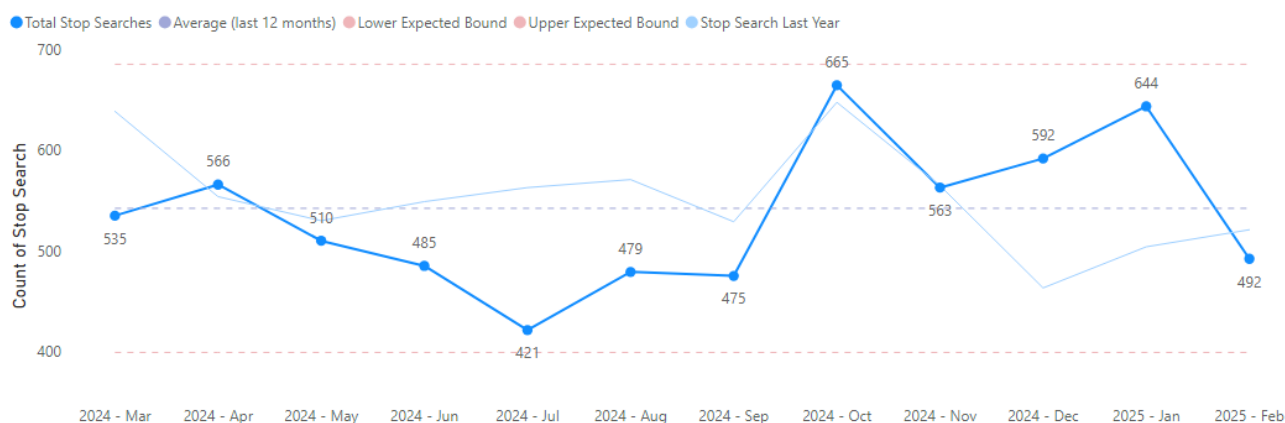
## Number of searches

The number of searches conducted per month has fluctuated from a low of 421 in July 2024 to highs of 665 in October 2024 and 644 in January 2025. Figure 2 indicates some seasonal correlation with the pattern of searches in the previous reporting period, notably in October. Additionally, it is of note that throughout the year, the number of searches conducted each month did not exceed the Constabulary's modelled upper or lower bounds.

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 (2024 – 2025 compared to preceding year)

#### Stop Search by Month

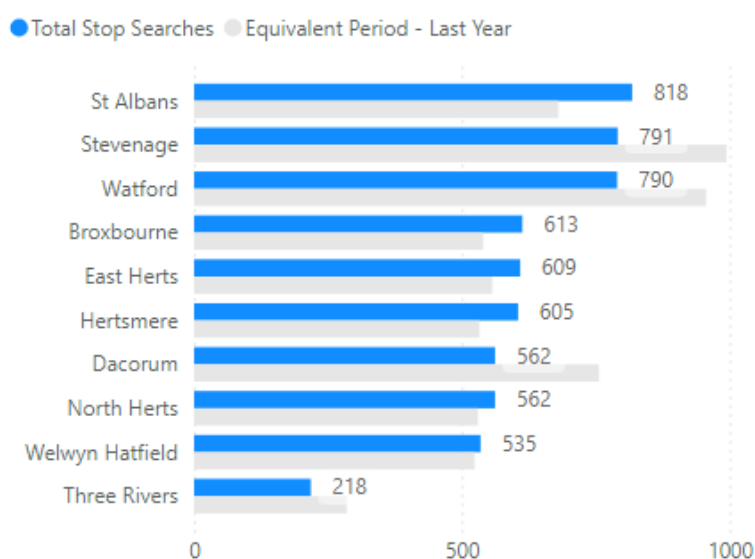


(source: PowerBI, accessed 25<sup>th</sup> April 2025)

Figure 3 shows the breakdown of stop and searches across the county's ten CSPs. This year, St Albans conducted the greatest number of searches (818), compared to 989 in Stevenage in the previous reporting period. As with last year, Three Rivers carried out the fewest searches compared to other CSPs (218, a decrease of 67 on the previous year).

Figure 3: Stop and Search Volumes by CSP (2024 – 2025 compared to preceding year)

#### Stop Search Volumes by CSP



(source: PowerBI, accessed 25<sup>th</sup> April 2025)

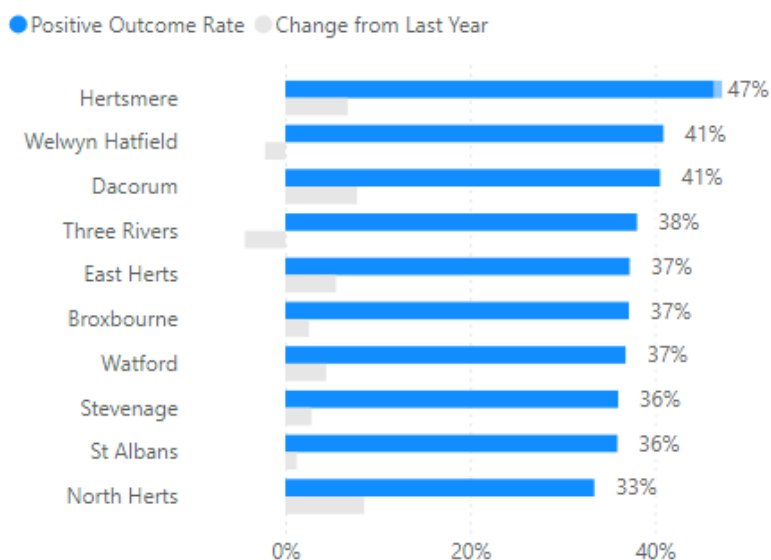
## Positive outcome rate

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 38%, an increase of 3% 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 2023/24, apart from Three Rivers and Welwyn Hatfield which witnessed small decreases in positive outcome rates of 4.4% and 2.2% respectively.

Figure 4: Percentage of total positive outcome rate by CSP (2024 – 2025 compared to preceding year)

### Positive Outcome Rate



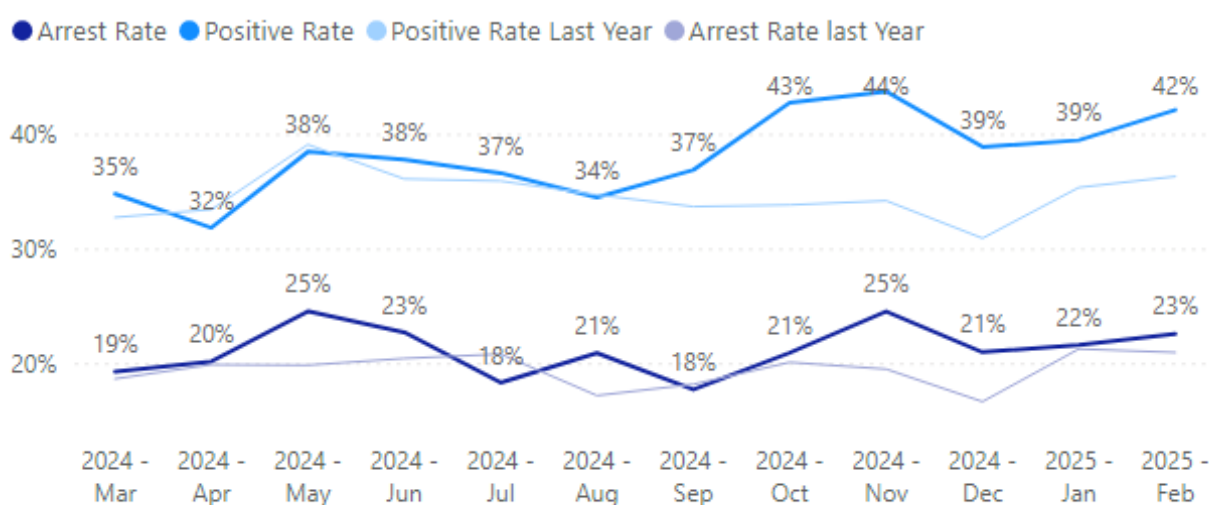
(source: PowerBI, accessed 25<sup>th</sup> April 2025)

## 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 18% and 25%. 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 April, May and August 2024. This differs from trends seen in 2023/24, where the positive disposal rate was lower each month for the period of November 2023 to January 2024 compared to the year before.

Figure 5: Arrest Rate and Positive Disposal Rate (2024 – 2025 compared to preceding year)

### Arrest Rate and Positive Disposal Rate



(source: PowerBI, accessed 25<sup>th</sup> April 2025)

### Panel scrutiny of stop and search records

This year, 496 dip-sampled stop and search records in Hertfordshire were scrutinised. This represents a 14.5% increase (up from 433) in the number of records scrutinised by the Panel on last year. The Panel assessed 8.7% of all stop and search records available, compared to 6.8% in the previous year. 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.

The Panel's position of confidence in the stop and search records (written records and BWV) scrutinised this year was **83.2%** (an increase on 74.9% in 2023/24 and 66.1% in 2022/23).

The year-on-year increase in the Panel's position of confidence reflects the fact that the Panel continues to see improvements in the overall quality of written records. These improvements are at least in part attributable to the scrutiny work of the Panel itself, with a strong and established feedback loop in place to ensure its work informs Constabulary policy, practice and training. These improvements have in turn enabled the Panel to continue increasing the overall volume of scrutiny undertaken year-on-year.

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

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

- 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.

Two additional themes were identified by Panel members this year:

- Lack of detail on engagement between officer and detained person (this was particularly identified in the deep dive of stops taking place in Broxbourne).
- Ineffective use of templates – often when a template is used it leads to a less coherent report, whereby the narrative is hard to follow as the information is split up in a counterintuitive manner to satisfy the template headings.

#### **Case Study of a record the Panel were not confident in**

Intelligence has informed us that the vehicle was being used for drug use/dealing. I myself saw cannabis and cocaine residue when the car was abandoned the week prior. The driver of the vehicle name 1 is a well know drug dealer/user as well, further adding to the grounds

**Panel comments: How old is the intelligence? Officer stopped due to intelligence a week ago. Lacks detail**

The record above exemplifies a common concern flagged by the Panel where the precise nature of the 'intelligence' cited to justify the stop is lacking. This suggests there is a requirement for the Constabulary to ensure the need to provide clear detail on intelligence is embedded in the mindset of officers.

#### **Case Study of a record the Panel were confident in**

Police received a call from owner of a house stating that there were two individuals in his rear garden who were attempting to gain entry to his property. His property had been targeted before and he was the victim of burglary. The home owner stated that the front and rear garden was very overgrown and his property was in a poor state. The state of the garden meant that there was little visibility from the front of the property meaning that the property was an ideal target for those looking to steal property. The home owner stated that he was having to hide within his own property due to the concerns that he had that these individuals may gain entry. The individuals were described as both teens, maybe in their twenties, one in a white shirt and a blazer and the other was a black male all in black. On arrival we entered the rear garden around the side of the building. Once in the back garden two individuals matching the description of the suspects were standing right next to the rear door, exactly where the reporting party stated that they would be. One of the individuals was the subject of this search and could be described as a black male, in his teens, with short black hair and dressed all in black with a black puffer jacket. There was slight damage to the rear door of the property (this was later confirmed by the home owner to be historical from a previous police incident). On announcing our arrival as police officers both males froze and didn't offer any explanation of their presence at the location, therefore raising suspicion.

**Panel comments: great detail including relevant surroundings**

The Panel always recognises 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 narrative; and a precise explanation of the relevant intelligence and how it resulted in the stop of the individual concerned. The record above was flagged by the Panel as a textbook example of a written record.

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.)

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; more appropriate use of templates; and sufficient detail to enable the Panel to make an informed grading. Whilst the Panel continues to find identical records where grounds are copied and pasted for separate incidents, these are now far fewer in number, and this represents an area where Panel feedback has directly improved Constabulary practice.

## 8. Data and Disproportionality

### Data-driven scrutiny

Thanks to the work of the data subgroup, the Panel has adopted a more targeted, data-influenced approach to its scrutiny. In addition to continuing to dip-sample stops, the Panel dedicates a portion of scrutiny time to assess areas and groups identified by the subgroup's independent data analysis work.

During the reporting period, the data subgroup helped the Panel deliver scrutiny deep dives on the following themes:

- Stop and searches in North Herts CSP, due to the complaints trigger threshold being met<sup>15</sup>. The Panel graded as Green 76.2% of records and no thematic issues of concern were identified across the selection of records reviewed.
- The data subgroup identified that stops with a 'not-stated ethnicity' typically had poorer positive outcome and arrest rates. The Panel ran deep dives in July, August and September 2024 and the records reviewed did not reveal any trends of concern.
- The subgroup also identified that stops involving 0–17-year-olds had poorer positive outcome rates compared to other age ranges. Deep dives took place in October and November 2024. The Panel's position of confidence in stops involving 0–17-year-olds was 81.2% and thus broadly equivalent to its overall position of confidence for all records reviewed in the year.
- The deep dive of stops in Broxbourne CSP flagged several records lacking detail on officer engagement with detainees. These comments were fed back to the Constabulary and the Panel will revisit this deep dive at a future meeting to track progress.

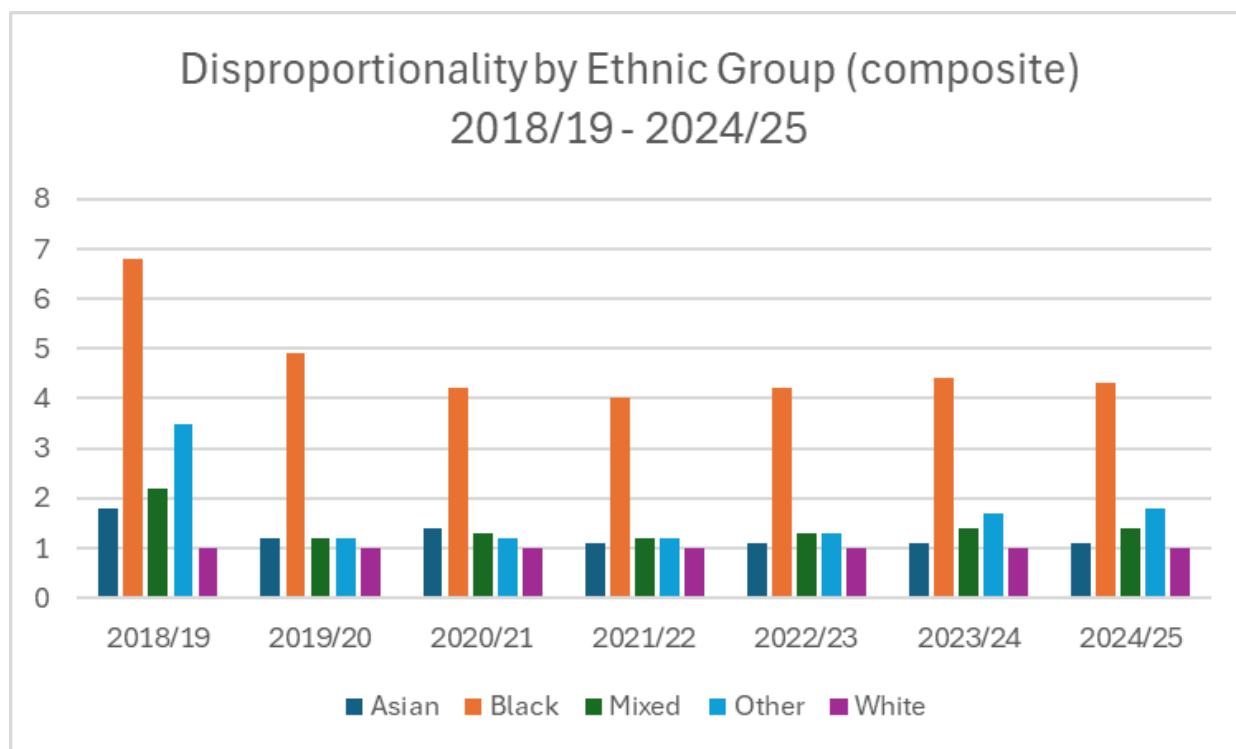
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<sup>15</sup> It was agreed by the Panel that a Community Complaints Trigger will be issued if the number of complaints for a particular district is higher than one per month.

## Constabulary data on disproportionality

Figure 8 reflects the latest data<sup>16</sup> available from PowerBI, indicating stop and search disproportionality by ethnic group from 2018/19 to 2024/25. The disproportionality rate for Black people being stopped and searched reduced from 6.8 in 2018/19 to 4.3 in 2024/25 (compared to 4.4 last year).

Figure 8: Disproportionality by Composite Ethnic Group



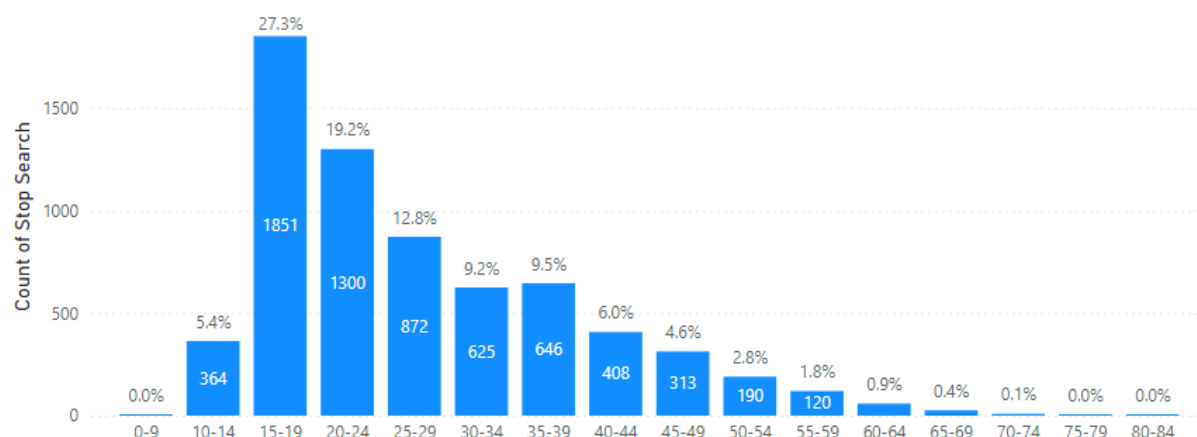
(source: PowerBI, accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025)

Figure 9 illustrates that people aged 15 to 24 accounted for almost half (46.5%) of all stops in Hertfordshire in 2024/25 (compared to 47.1% in the previous year), whilst figure 10 shows that in the same period the vast majority of stops (78%) were of Males. This is a reasonably significant decrease on last year's figure of 84.7%.

<sup>16</sup> 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 (2024 – 2025)

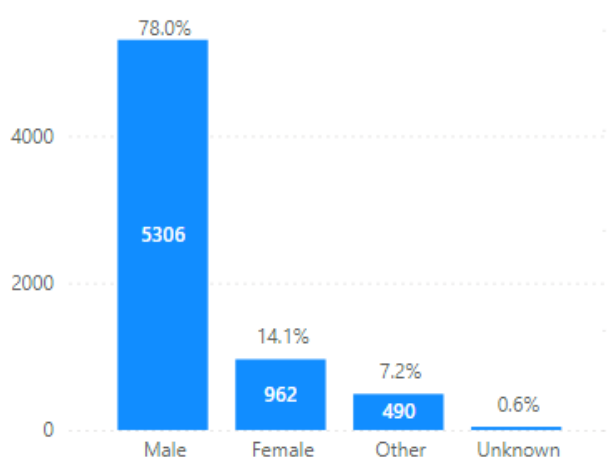
Stop Search on Person by Age Group



(source: PowerBI, accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025)

Figure 10: Stop and Search by gender (2024 – 2025)

Stop Search on Person by Gender



(source: PowerBI, accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025)

## 9. Body Worn Video (BWV)

The Panel has delivered on its commitment to scrutinise more BWV footage this year. 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 41 pieces of BWV this year, compared to 32 in 2023/24 and 18 in 2022/23. Of the 41 pieces of BWV scrutinised, the Panel were confident (i.e. Green 1 or Green 2) in 36 records.

Two concerns were noted by the Panel during its scrutiny of BWV, which were also noted last year:

- On seven 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 four occasions, the Panel noted officers for excellent conduct, particularly around being professional, respectful and thorough during the incident. There were two incidents where the Panel was confident in the BWV but not the corresponding written record, and three incidents where the Panel was confident in the written record but not the corresponding BWV. For the latter, this was principally due to details in the written record around the detained person's behaviour, or the circumstances of the stop, not matching what was observed in the BWV.

## 10. Section 60s

Whilst there was no use of Section 60 for the Panel to review during the reporting period, in line with best practice, the Panel reviews all uses of Section 60 when they do occur as a matter of policy. When uses of Section 60 are reviewed, an Inspector attends to set out the decision-making process, 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 PSD.

In 2024/25:

- 17 complaints relating to stop and search were made by the public, a decrease of 10 on last year.
- 6,427 stop and searches were conducted in Hertfordshire. This means there was a complaint raised for 0.26% of all stop and searches (compared to 0.41% last year).
- Of the 17 allegations received, complaints related to not being provided the relevant paperwork, being unlawfully stopped and searched or without reasonable grounds, and individual officer behaviour of either being intolerant, impolite, unprofessional, or overbearing.
- Of the 17 complaints made regarding stop and search, CRT handled 14 of these and found no failings/learnings. The remaining 3 were formally recorded and redirected to PSD, either due to a complainant's request for the complaint to be formally logged OR due to the

nature of other allegations (e.g. discrimination) being made within the same complaint meaning that CRT were unable to informally handle the complaint.

## 12. Conclusion

This report evidences the Panel's overall view that there are no serious concerns about the use of stop and search in Hertfordshire. The Panel's position of confidence in records reviewed has increased to **83.2%** in 2024/25 (from 74.9% in the previous year).

More widely, the historical trend of year-on-year improvements in arrest rates and positive outcome rates continued in 2024/25. 21.2% of searches resulted in an arrest – a 1.8% increase on the previous year. The countywide positive outcome rate for stop and searches this year was 38% - an increase of 3% on the previous year.

This report notes the Panel's successes this year, and proposes steps to enhance further its work in scrutinising the use of stop and search powers in Hertfordshire:

- Continue to evolve the more data-influenced approach to scrutiny work now undertaken by the Panel, making more sophisticated use of PowerBI to understand trends and anomalies and identify issues requiring further investigation – and tracking progress over time.
- Continue to develop and implement the cross-panel communications and engagement strategy to increase community awareness of and involvement in scrutiny work, and diversity of panel membership by ethnicity, age and lived experience of police activity.
- Identify further ways to remove potential barriers to Panel membership for those in full-time work or study. Plans are now in place to trial evening and hybrid Panel meetings in the immediate term.
- Continue to increase the sample size of BWV scrutinised at meetings as a proportion of its wider scrutiny work, reflecting the value of BWV in enabling effective scrutiny.

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

## Appendix A: Comparison of Stop and Searches figures from Hertfordshire and Most Similar Force Group (March 2024 – March 2025)<sup>17</sup>

March 2024 to March 2025	Avg Monthly stops %	Average NFA %	Avg arrest %	Avg % other outcomes	Arrest + other outcomes Avg
Hertfordshire	532	75.9%	14.9%	13.3%	28.2%
Avon & Somerset	512	59.0%	23.4%	13.3%	36.7%
Essex	1220	66.9%	13.9%	19.2%	33.1%
Hampshire	1101	72.2%	11.4%	15.7%	27.1%
Leicestershire	411	68%	17.6%	10.9%	28.5%
Staffordshire	536	61.4%	15.1%	14.3%	29.4%
Sussex	516	59.7%	22.9%	14.8%	37.7%
Thames Valley	1405	75.5%	9.5%	14.8%	24.3%

<sup>17</sup> 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.**

## Appendix B: Progress Review on Last Year's Recommendations

2023/24 recommendations		Progress update
1.	Building on the findings from the University of Hertfordshire's report on stop and search, ensure disproportionality becomes a routine area of scrutiny.	Business as usual. Data and disproportionality is now embedded in the Panel's scrutiny work.
2.	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 data subgroup has delivered significant progress this year in using data to shape the direction of the Panel's scrutiny. Use of data to shape scrutiny will remain a priority for the year ahead.
3.	Find effective ways to deliver a more diverse Panel membership by ethnicity, age and those with lived experience of police activity.	Ongoing. New and innovative ways have been found to involve young and ethnically diverse groups in scrutiny, principally through the mock panels and RIB Young People Forum. The next stage is to increase diversity of membership on the Panel.
4.	Deliver a communications strategy spanning the OPCC's scrutiny panels to increase community awareness of and involvement in the panels' work.	Strategy in place and being delivered. There is more progress to be made.
5.	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.	Being delivered. The Panel has been hosted by new external venues this year. Plans are in place to trial hybrid meetings at a police estate location before potentially rolling out this format more widely.
6.	Continue to increase the sample size of BWV scrutinised at meetings.	Business as usual. The Panel increased the volume of BWV reviewed this year and the objective is to keep increasing the volume year-on-year.
7.	Work with the OPCC's CRT to understand how its rich data sets can be used to inform and advance areas of Panel scrutiny.	Business as usual. CRT provide regular updates at Panel meetings which informs scrutiny and wider learning.
8.	Continue to implement the Health Check recommendations and adopt the Home Office's draft National Guidance for Community Scrutiny	Complete. The Home Office guidance is now under review following the change in government. We benchmark against national best practice from NPCC and peer

	Panels to ensure that the Panel aligns with national best practice.	review against other force areas to continue improving.
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## 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 stop and search data

The Constabulary provide the Panel with data which outlines stop and search activity from the preceding period. 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.
- The total number of stop and searches in relation to drugs and acquisitive crime 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).

It was agreed by the Panel that a Community Complaints Trigger<sup>18</sup> 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.

### Strip searches of a child

PACE Code C<sup>19</sup> 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 recommendation<sup>20</sup>.

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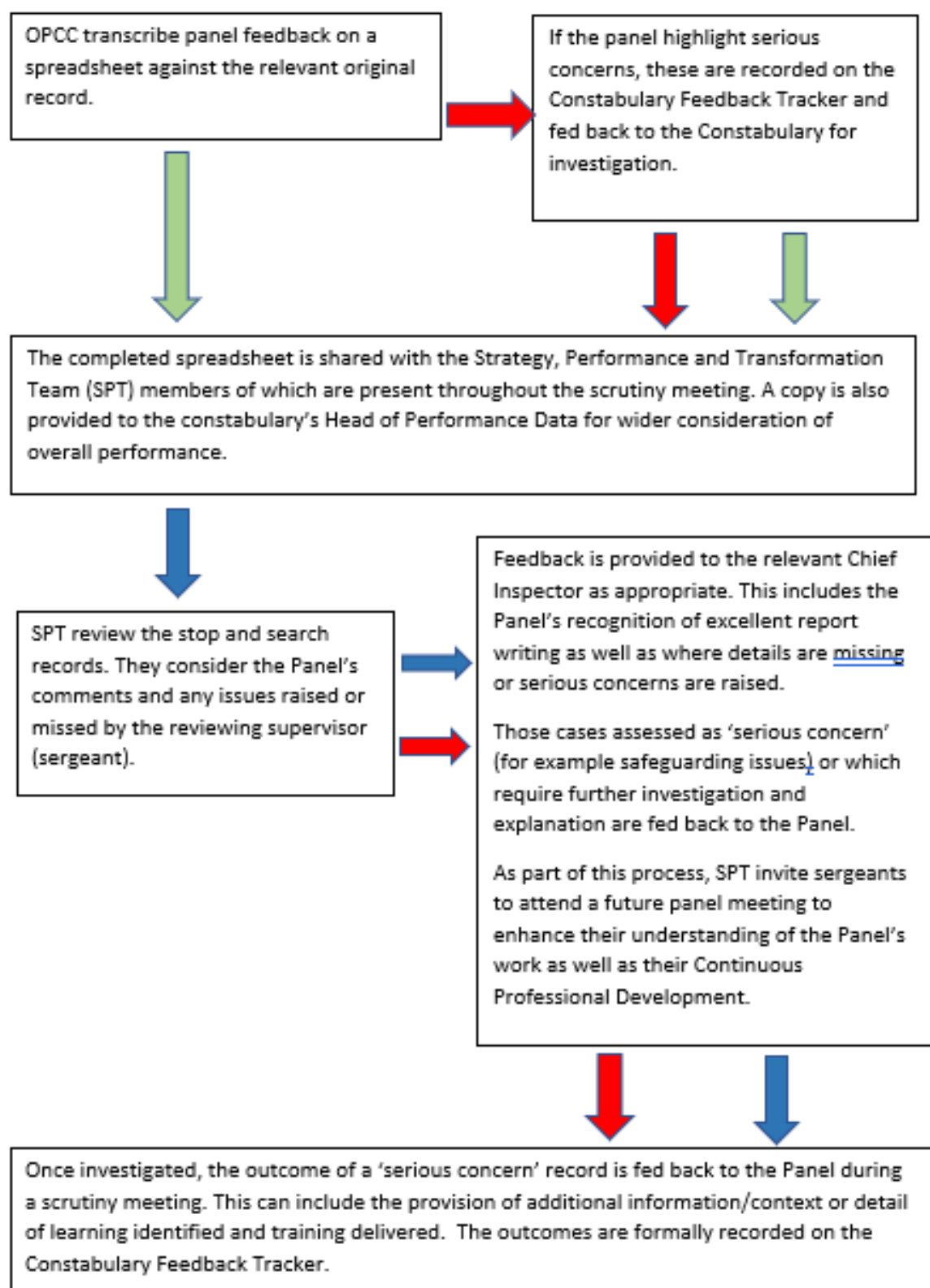
<sup>18</sup> The Community Complaints Trigger is a complaint policy that requires the police to explain to the community how the powers are being used if there is a large volume of complaints. This is in addition to the force complaints process. This allows for an independent review and ensures there 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/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/police-and-criminal-evidence-act-1984-pace-codes-of-practice>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resource/strip-search-of-children-in-england-and-wales/>

## Appendix D: Feedback Loop

### Scrutiny Feedback Loop



## Appendix E: RAG Grading Systems for Written Records and BWV

Written Record	
<b>EXCELLENT</b>  <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>
<b>SATISFACTORY</b>  <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>
<b>NOT CONFIDENT</b>  <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>
<b>SERIOUS CONCERNS</b>  <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><b>EXCELLENT</b></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><b>SATISFACTORY</b></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><b>NOT CONFIDENT</b></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><b>SERIOUS CONCERNS</b></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 <sup>21</sup> 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"> <li>• Grounds for the search (reason for suspicion)</li> <li>• Object of the search (i.e., what is being looked for)</li> <li>• Warrant number, (if not in uniform)</li> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• Station to which the officer is attached.</li> <li>• Entitlement to copy of search within 3 months or 12 months in the case of Section 60</li> <li>• Legal Power being exercised.</li> <li>• 'You are detained for the purpose of a search' (person searched must be informed of this)</li> </ul>

<sup>21</sup> <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"> <li>• illegal drugs</li> <li>• a weapon</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• stolen property</li><li>• something which could be used to commit a crime, such as a crowbar</li></ul>
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**Police & Crime  
Commissioner**  
**FOR HERTFORDSHIRE**



**INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS SCHEME  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2024 – 2025**



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



The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report for 2024–2025 reflects the dedication, integrity, and commitment of our Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs), who continue to play a vital role in ensuring transparency and accountability in our custody suites in Hertfordshire.

I am grateful for the continued professionalism, commitment and compassion shown by our ICV volunteers. Their work provides essential oversight for the rights and welfare of detainees, offering reassurance to the public that our police custody practices are fair, lawful, and respectful of human dignity.

This year's report highlights both the challenges and achievements of the scheme. Despite temporary closures of custody suites for refurbishment and the added pressure of supporting neighbouring forces, our ICVs conducted 96 visits and engaged with 694 detainees. The increase in the percentage of detainees visited, alongside a reduction in the number of issues raised, demonstrates the positive impact of ongoing improvements in custody procedures and volunteer engagement.

The scheme continues to seek to improve the diversity of ICVs with renewed efforts to recruit volunteers from under-represented parts of Hertfordshire. This is essential to maintaining public confidence and ensuring that all voices are represented in our oversight processes.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to enhancing the scheme through improved data quality, digital innovation, and the pursuit of excellence under the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) Quality Assurance Framework. The introduction of a new ICV visit booking system and the continued collaboration with ICVA are promising steps toward a more efficient and responsive scheme.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to every ICV, past and present, for their invaluable contribution to scrutiny, accountability and high standards. I also thank the staff of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Hertfordshire Constabulary for their ongoing support of the scheme.

Together, we will continue to ensure that custody in Hertfordshire remains a place which is safe, where people are treated with dignity and custody is open to scrutiny.

**Jonathan Ash-Edwards**  
**Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner**

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



I am pleased to contribute to this year's Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme Annual Report, which once again highlights the vital role our volunteers play in ensuring transparency, accountability, and the highest standards of care within our custody environments.

The past year has presented both challenges and opportunities. Temporary closures of our custody suites for essential refurbishment, alongside the additional demand from supporting neighbouring forces, tested our resilience. Despite this, the professionalism of our custody staff and the dedication of our ICVs ensured that detainee welfare remained a top priority. I am particularly proud that, even with fewer visits, the percentage of detainees seen by ICVs increased, reflecting improved engagement and operational efficiency.

The feedback from ICVs continues to be instrumental in shaping our practices. Their observations—whether highlighting areas for improvement or recognising compassionate and professional conduct—are taken seriously and acted upon. The reduction in reported issues, especially in areas such as access to medical care, is encouraging, though we acknowledge there is still work to do, particularly in strengthening healthcare provision and ensuring consistent service availability.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to working closely with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the ICVs to enhance our service.

I extend my sincere thanks to all our ICVs for their time, commitment, and integrity. Your work is a cornerstone of public confidence in our custody services, and your continued partnership is deeply valued.

**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 entitlements<sup>1</sup> 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 2025 we had 27 ICVs compared to 29 last year. Recruitment will be a focus over the coming year to replace those who have already left and those who will be reaching the end of their tenure in the next 12 months. This recruitment drive 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

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<sup>1</sup> An extensive list of these legal rights are provided under the section Rights of Detainees

the Commissioner. The Commissioner also incurs other related costs for running the scheme 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, the scheme manager attended the ICVA National Conference in November 2024 at a cost of £150+VAT plus travel and OPCC Membership of ICVA was renewed at a cost of £1750+VAT. ICV Expenses claims have totalled £1,850.

Nationally, the Independent Custody Visitor Association<sup>2</sup> 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 that they are kept informed of legislative changes and reforms. The recent increase in the ICVA subscription fee will allow them to develop improved ICV training and create a digital reporting tool that captures information from visits.

## **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, recognise the independent voice of volunteers, and increase sharing of good practice.

Having been presented with the silver award in November 2023, ICVA has since launched the revised standards (March 2025). Over the next year it is our aim to build on what has been achieved so far and work towards a new gold standard.

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

## Key Findings (1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025)

### Number of Visits

Over twelve-months, 12,856 detainees passed through both custody suites (6,766 through Hatfield and 6,090 through Stevenage). This compares to a total of 12,280 detainees in 2023/2024, an increase of 4.6%. This is a slight increase on the previous year and could be accounted for by the fact that during the year Hertfordshire was an overflow for the Luton custody suite which was undergoing renovation. Overall, ICVs visited 5.3% of those detainees who were booked in<sup>3</sup>, an increase on the previous year (4.7%). A figure that can be attributed to a higher number of visits carried out over the year.

Figure 1 shows that in 2024/25, ICVs undertook 96 custody visits, speaking to or observing a total of 694 detainees from a possible 805 who were available for a visit. While the number of visits is down from 113 on the previous year, both custody suites were closed for refurbishment for several weeks over the summer of 2024. This prevented the usual visits from happening.

**Figure 1: Breakdown of the visits for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025**

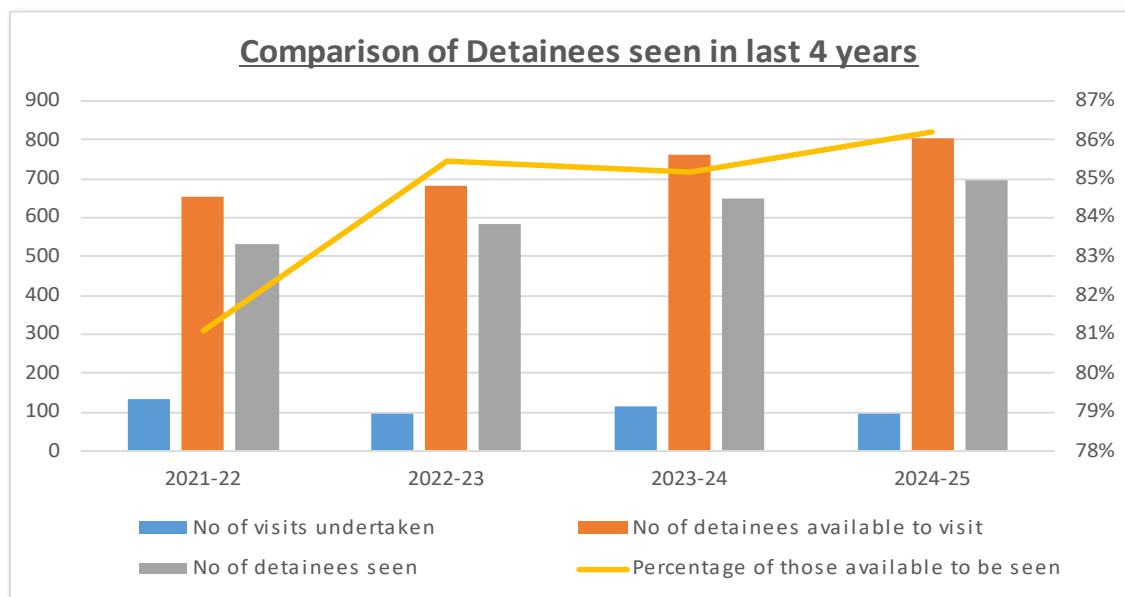
Custody Suite Visited	No. of visits undertaken	No. of detained persons held	No. of detainees available to visit	No. of detained persons visited	% of detainees visited (of those available)
Hatfield	46	569	413	364	88%
Stevenage	50	557	392	330	84%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>1126</b>	<b>805</b>	<b>694</b>	<b>86%</b>

Although the number of visits decreased, as illustrated in Figure 2, the percentage of detainees spoken to or observed increased slightly from 85% to 86%. It should be noted that the number of detainees held at the time of ICV visits was 39% higher than in the previous year. This increase is possibly due to an overspill from Luton custody which underwent a refurbishment at the end of 2024/25. In addition, the work undertaken in 2023/24 to improve how custody officers introduce ICVs to detainees may also be improving the level of engagement.

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

**Figure 2: Comparison of detainees seen between 2021/22 and 2024/25**



## Declined Visits

Detainees who do not consent to a visit equates to 14% of the cohort (see Figure 1). This is a slight decrease on the previous figure of 15% and compares more favourably with other forces; the refusal rate elsewhere is between 7% and 16%<sup>4</sup>. There are several 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.

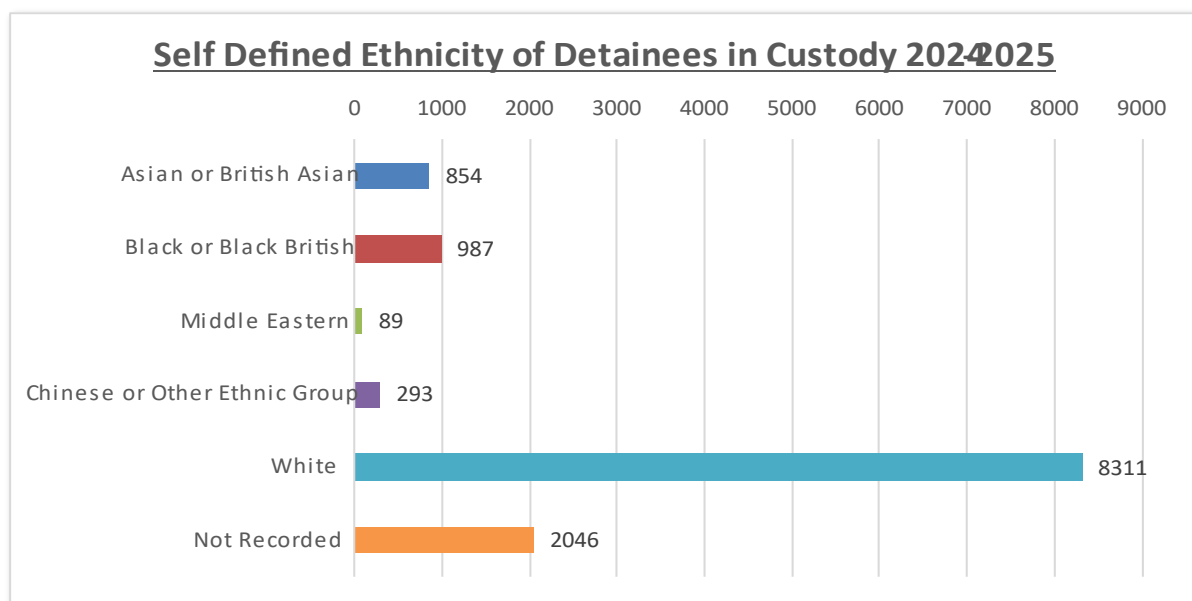
In the coming year we will continue monitoring refusal data and try to find ways of improving the interactions between detainees and ICVs.

## 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 19% of records, down from 21%. While this is not a mandatory field on the custody record, the expectation is that staff complete this field and that future updates to the system will make this mandatory. Monthly reports are reviewed by the Custody Chief Inspector to identify non-compliance so that Inspectors can address these issues their teams directly.

<sup>4</sup> Taken from annual reports and direct enquiries with other forces.

**Figure 3: Self-Defined Ethnicity of those passing through custody 2024-2025**



### Profile of the Independent Custody Visitors

At the end of 2024/25 there were 27 ICVs supporting the scheme who live in Hertfordshire. This is a decrease of two on the previous year. While short of our target of retaining around 30-35 volunteers the level of engagement and commitment among the existing cohort of volunteers is high, which means the scheme operates well and further recruitment will be targeted over the next year.

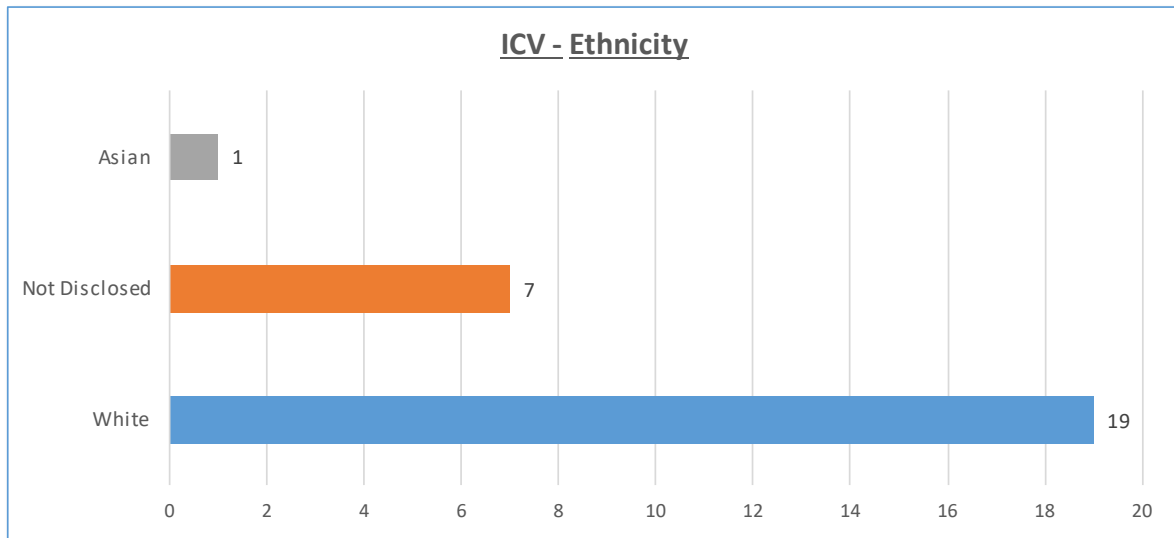
ICVs are asked to fill in a voluntary information disclosure agreement. This year 100% declared their age and gender, and 74% disclosed their ethnicity. From the data available, 56% of volunteers are male, 44% are female, 70% are from white backgrounds and 70% are over the age of 60 years (see Figures 4<sup>5</sup> and 5<sup>6</sup>). Forthcoming recruitment campaigns will focus more notably on how we engage people from all backgrounds to increase diversity among our ICVs.

<sup>5</sup> 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:

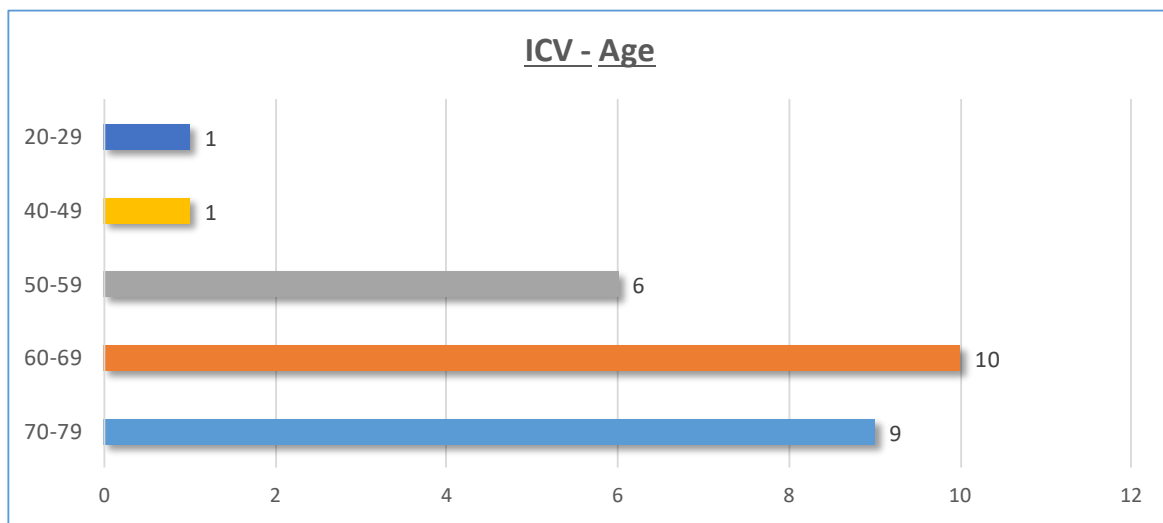
[https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/census\\_2021/report?compare=E10000015#section\\_5](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/census_2021/report?compare=E10000015#section_5)

<sup>6</sup> 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 performed at least one visit to each custody suite per week, other than when these were closed for refurbishment. The visits take place over a 24-hour period which meets the minimum statutory requirement. We aim to undertake a total of three visits per week when availability permits – this has not been consistently possible in the reporting year due to volunteer capacity.

During 2024/25 of the 694 detainees visited, issues were noted from 21 detainees (3%) compared to 27 (4.2%) in the previous year. In total, 36 issues<sup>7</sup> raised by detainees were reviewed and 10 raised by ICVs. Concerns raised by detainees relate to the Rights of Detainee, and more specifically access to medical help (see Figure 7).

Overall, 97% of detainees did not raise any issues regarding their welfare whilst in custody, this is compared to 96% over the previous reporting period. 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.

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<sup>7</sup> 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**

	<b>Rights of Detainee</b>	<b>Vulnerable Detainees</b>	<b>Access to Amenities</b>	<b>Services Available</b>	<b>Cleaning</b>	<b>Maintenance</b>	<b>Food Drink Reading</b>	<b>Detention Issues PACE</b>	<b>ICV Staff Issues</b>	<b>Positive Feedback</b>
<b>White British</b>	13%	3%			3%			1%		5%
<b>White Irish</b>		1%								1%
<b>Any Other White</b>	1%	1%								4%
<b>White and Black Caribbean</b>		1%								1%
<b>White and Black African</b>										
<b>Mixed White and Asian</b>										
<b>Any Other Mixed</b>	1%									1%
<b>Asian/British Indian</b>										
<b>Asian British Pakistani</b>										1%
<b>Asian/British Bangladesh</b>									1%	
<b>Any Other Asian</b>										
<b>Black/British Caribbean</b>	1%									
<b>Black/British African</b>	1%									
<b>Any Other Black</b>	1%									
<b>Chinese</b>										
<b>Any Other Ethnic Group</b>	1%									
<b>Refused/Not stated</b>	1%									
<b>Not Recorded by ICV</b>	0%			9%	9%	9%	7%		12%	5%

## 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**

<b>Rights of Detainee</b>	<b>Number of Issues raised</b>	<b>% of total</b>	<b>Number of Valid Issues/ Number of Not Valid Issues</b>
Access to medical help	7	41%	3/4
Phone Call	4	24%	0/4
Access to food	2	12%	1/1
Access to free legal advice	2	12%	0/2
Not given rights	1	6%	1/0
Someone informed of their location	1	6%	0/1
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%	
<b>Total issues noted</b>	<b>17</b>		

The highest reported area of concern once again is ‘access to medical help’; however, the number of issues reported is reduced from the 12 recorded last year to 7. Of the seven issues raised, it was verified that two of these were due to a delay in being seen. In two other cases the detainees had not notified custody staff of their medical needs – this information led to subsequent medical visits. The remaining three cases were due to issues in administering medication; one due to medication not being labelled which staff are unable to administer; one due to missing doses due to lack of medical cover on site; and one stating medication was needed, which the detainee didn’t have. On this occasion a medical visit was arranged and in the other cases, substitute medication was provided.

Only one person wished to make a formal complaint about the delay and again, the importance of getting medication to detainees promptly has been reiterated. In this case the delay in administering the dose could have had serious repercussions for the welfare of the detainee.

On nine visits the ICVs specifically commented on the lack of on-site healthcare provision, either at certain times of the day or for extended periods. A new provider took over the contract in April 2024 with the expectation that there would be better coverage over each 24-hour period. While there is no data showing where gaps are happening most frequently, the impression from ICVs is that coverage has improved when noted at the time of their visits. Figures show coverage rates as high as 97.3% in March 2025 but as low as 67.1% in June 2024. The average for healthcare cover over the year is 87.2% per month overall.

Gaps in healthcare coverage are still proving to be an issue although there is no time of day where coverage is consistently lacking but these issues are being raised with the provider.

Of the four issues relating to phone call, in two cases, this had been refused for operational reasons, one was refused because the detainee only wanted a private call which could not be granted. In the other case, the detainee had no contact details, but staff were attempting to make contact with a family member.

Of the issues regarding access to food, in one case the detainee claimed they had not had any food, a check of the custody record showed they had been given food. In the other case, the detainee claimed they had asked for a meal which had not been provided. A check of the custody record was inconclusive about whether this had been requested, and any action taken.

It should be noted that the issue of low stocks of sandwiches was sometimes reported by ICVs however 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.

## **2. ICV Staff Issues**

This was the second highest reported category with ten 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 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, or other incidents requiring officers' attention that could pose a risk to the ICVs.

Four issues were directly related to lack of blankets with clothing having to be used in lieu of adequate supplies. This issue has subsequently been taken up by senior custody officers and a new contract is being put in place to address the irregular supply issues.

One issue raised by ICVs involved them being challenged by a Sergeant upon letting themselves into an area near a custody suite. The ICV was questioned as to whether they should be there. The ICVs are vetted, they work in pairs and have been granted access to police stations so that when safe to do so, they are able to enter a custody suite directly. The officer concerned was identified and while it was acknowledged he was concerned for the safety of both the station and the ICVs, it was clarified what right of access they have.

The final issue related to ICVs not passing on a message from a detainee to the escorting officer. The ICVs believed the officer would have heard what was said so did not follow the correct procedure in making sure the officer was aware. The scheme manager spoke to both ICVs and clarified what was expected in this situation.

At present 69% of prisoners at Hatfield and 70% at Stevenage wait less than 30 minutes to be booked in at custody suites.

### **3. Cleanliness & Maintenance**

Cleanliness and maintenance issues were noted on a total of ten occasions. Issues related to cells that needed cleaning, an unclean microwave in the kitchen and dirty air-conditioning units. CCTV issues were mentioned on at least five occasions, and it was noted that the systems were due to be replaced and upgraded. This upgrade is now complete with ICVs and staff commenting on how good the new system is.

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, and the issues reported are rare.

### **4. Services Available**

While on-site medical cover has improved, on seven occasions it was specifically mentioned that cover was not available when needed. This is something that will continue to be monitored as it is understood that the contractor is trying to get more staff in place to cover the gaps.

### **5. Vulnerable Detainees<sup>8</sup>**

In the reporting year, the ICVs identified two issues of concern relating to juveniles who were kept in overnight. In both cases there had been delays in appointing an Appropriate

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<sup>8</sup> For a definition of vulnerability, see Appendix 1.

Adult. This was being followed up regularly by custody officers however, social services were advising that no-one was available, and no family member could be contacted.

There are robust processes in place that aim to prevent overnight detention for vulnerable juveniles which were positively commented upon during the most recent HMICFRS inspection<sup>9</sup>. In both these cases, neither young person could be released home. The ICVs were satisfied that the assessments were reasonable, and both detainees commented that they had been well looked after.

One person was noted as being held under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

## **6. Food & Drink**

Four issues were noted relating to food and drink. Four related to the lack of sandwiches and intermittent supplies. While there are always plenty of other food options, such as microwave meals, sandwiches are stocked as an alternative. While stocks are monitored and provided there are other options, low supplies are not considered a major issue.

One issue related to the lack of Kosher food. While there was Hallal options, staff could not offer a Kosher option. To ensure that the detainee had something to eat, a staff member went and purchased some items.

No issues were noted by the ICVs under any of the other reporting categories during the 2024-25 reporting period.

## **7. Summary**

It is positive to see the number of issues reported by ICVs have not increased. Although some of the themes around healthcare provision are not fully resolved with a change of contractor, the issues of gaps in coverage are being raised with the provider and we will expect to see an improvement over the first half of the next reporting year. Overall, the observations made by ICVs continue to demonstrate that the Constabulary is maintaining the welfare, dignity and needs of detainees. These standards have also been maintained during a period when custody suites have been refurbished and when detainees from Bedfordshire were being brought to Hertfordshire.

## **8. Positive Feedback**

ICVs recorded several positive comments by detainees regarding their welfare in custody. Of the 15 noteworthy positive comments, 11 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; “very well looked after”, “everyone polite and reasonable”, “they’ve been tip-top, brilliant”, “10 out of 10” are of note.

Once again ICVs also noted that police staff were helpful and professional when dealing with detainees and themselves. This is commented on during most visits. On one specific occasion the ICVs noted a particularly compassionate interaction where a detainee had felt claustrophobic. The Perspex screen on the cell door was left open so the detainee could see the corridor and feel less enclosed.

## **Areas of focus for the year ahead (2025/2026)**

### **Recruitment**

Recruitment will continue with a focus on targeting a wider age and ethnic demographic, particularly as some volunteers will reach the end of their three-year tenure period. With new outreach and social media capacity within the OPCC we will seek to utilise these skills to promote and communicate more effectively.

Additionally, we will continue to use the GoVolHerts online volunteering portal to reach out to the community and take part in their volunteering activities. Work has been undertaken to explore other established online volunteering portals which have an extensive base of potential volunteers.

### **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 reviewing how other forces use electronic reporting for their ICVs. ICVA will also be developing a standardised system which may prove more suitable and cost effective than a bespoke approach. Our aim is to move to electronic reporting so that visit data is captured consistently, and so staff do not need to scan and email the forms, which also creates a more secure system for processing and analysing data.

The OPCC has also rolled out a new system for the ICVs to book their visits. This started to be trialled at the end of the reporting period and has so far proven successful. This creates greater flexibility for ICVs to coordinate their unannounced visit times.

### **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**

At the end of the year ICVA announced the next round of its QAF (Quality Assurance Framework) which will run until April 2026. The work previously carried out to achieve the silver award has identified areas to improve and consolidate. This largely relates to increasing the level of diversity among volunteers and improving our engagement with volunteers and the community. Working towards improvement has started and will lay the groundwork for a potential gold standard in this new 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 Custody<sup>9</sup>. The panel is made up of ICVs and representatives from the Constabulary who continue to meet on a regular basis 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.

Due to some ICVs stepping down we will be looking to recruit and train others to join this panel and continue with the scrutiny it provides.

## **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.

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

## Appendix 1

The term vulnerable<sup>10</sup> 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.

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<sup>10</sup> 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](mailto: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](http://www.hertscommissioner.org)

For more information on the role of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), please visit: [www.icva.org.uk](http://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 ethnic minority backgrounds.

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