



College of  
**Policing**

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to give policing a voice

## Exploring Outstanding Practice

Cambridge Police Stop and Search

Engagement from 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Led by Senior Policy Advisor Chief Inspector Chris Williams and  
Subject Matter Expert Sergeant Tarrick Patrick

## 1. Introduction

This report follows Cambridgeshire Police being graded 'Outstanding' in their Public Treatment by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Rescue Service (HMICFRS). The College of Policing (CoP) are seeking to explore well executed and innovative ways of working.

The CoP is grateful for the openness and candour during the force visit – with transparency around celebratory and developmental points.

The CoP would invite any feedback to further improve our approach to peer support.

The context behind the visit is that CoP and HMICFRS published a memorandum of understanding in January 2024. Our two organisations have complementary statutory purposes and different powers by which those purposes are to be achieved. Together our organisations are engaged in promoting the continuous improvement of policing to secure public safety and trust.

This is not an inspection or an audit, but a peer support piece of work focused on the S&S element of the HMICFRS police effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy (PEEL) question 'Police Powers and treating the public fairly and respectfully'.

## 2. Terms of Reference

The engagement is a peer review, not an inspection, conducted by CoP seconded colleagues, and is a discrete piece of work delivered by the CoP for Cambridgeshire Police. The CoP were treated as guests looking to learn and benefit from HMICFRS identified outstanding practice. Alongside exploring celebratory practice, the CoP will offer considerations to Cambridgeshire Police born from other notable practice.

This engagement examines S&S at an operational, tactical, strategic, and functional levels. The structure was built around HMIFRS and focused on what led to Cambridgeshire's 'Outstanding' rating.

The evidence capture consisted of.

- a two-day on-site engagement at Cambridgeshire Police benefitting from a series of face-to-face interviews by a team of CoP recognised S&S subject matter experts.
- A document review of internal Cambridgeshire Police's materials provided ahead of the engagement.
- A wider analysis of external reports with a focal point being on S&S HMICFRS determinations.

### 3. Executive Summary

Cambridgeshire Police are objectively assessed by HMICFRS to be delivering S&S to an exceptionally high standard. There was a high volume of commendable practice identified by the CoP.

- Cambridgeshire Police have provided focus to S&S. There is robust governance, the **strongest seen by the CoP in relation to this volume of activity** and possesses a consistent drive to improve and deliver in S&S from across the whole of Cambridgeshire. The governance is driven by the leadership and the processes present themselves are strong. This implies the systems can be sustained and considered by other forces with similar volumes and resources.
- **The analytics and data insight offered were remarkable**– supported by operational systems and an ability to bring about system change relatively easily compared to other forces. The data is readily available to all, and a clear expectation is set around supervisors knowing their data. The data is routinely used at an individual, team and force level to understand and improve practice. They have the insight, act on the insight, and monitor the impact and efficacy of interventions and initiatives.
- The S&S leaders were well known and mentioned by name during front line focus groups. Leaders were personally are involved with key training. There is compelling evidence of **strong visible leadership and a learning culture at all levels.**

- A minority of the front-line focus group of practitioners displayed cynicism against the level of scrutiny they are exposed to. However, the benefits of the feedback were proven given there was **confidence in applying the S&S and an appreciation of the value community oversight can offer**. Officers showed a **strong understanding of wider S&S issues and impact**.
- The community scrutiny panel **was proactive**, clearly displayed evidence that the feedback loop was completed where they had identified observations and they were competent in their function. **This is praiseworthy**. Where challenges around representation and lived experience were evident - several initiatives are seeking to address this gap were live, showing Cambridgeshire are taking positive steps to bridge gaps.
- S&S training and ongoing CPD **support was well executed** with a supportive approach being at the centre— again through visible hands-on leadership. Some anecdotal concerns regarding individual recruit trainers were raised which stated they were advised not to use the power. However, the officers spoken with had moved past this advice.

## 4. Findings

### S&S Governance and Data Systems

Adherence Cambridgeshire Police's S&S governance structure is robust and one of the tightest identified by CoP peer support. It is commendable the governance and feedback processes are followed, and the **identified high standards maintained**. This is evidently driven by Superintendent Sissons and Caitlin Bones. There is a whole force approach for transformation, delivered by the Change Board, which simplifies how to deliver schemes of work. This is apparent from '*From Lawful to Legitimate Stop and Searches*' 2023 proposal being felt throughout the peer review. The **feedback loop has been systematically established** with common patterns and recurring issues addressed within the governance structure leading to operational delivery improvements. The **team were aware of the actionable themes** and knew how these were addressed. This was apparent in the 'copy and paste' theme being addressed when groups were searched. A **supportive approach is at the centre** of any issue identified and this was apparent from

grounds reviewed – with a focus on new officers and *'Don't Stop Stopping'* being touch stone, looking to maintain officer confidence from the feedback. The governance is underpinned by **key data being accessible and easy to access** to all end users with no gate keepers or time delays. This not only enables insights but with the governance process the **insights are acted on** with interventions, evidenced through #TheConversation for disproportionate power use and deployment of a Trade Craft officer. The mobile device platform demonstration showed a **sophisticated approach to recording S&S**. This was complimented by a MS Forms approach to supervision enabling easier analytics and aiding the ability to draw insight at a first line leadership level. The training was observed and the rationale behind the form was fully explained by the tactical lead – **showing senior leadership sponsorship**.

**Consideration:** A standardised framework to assess reasonable grounds may support consistency. This would need to also be reflected in all training material and technology updates for S&S.

**Consideration:** The challenge of providing a receipt to someone who does not want to give their details but still receive their receipt, without the carbon copy option readily available, could be met by having a receipt produced on the mobile device for the person to take a picture of it.

### Examples of good practice

The Metropolitan Police Service (Met) have developed a framework called POSH. This focuses on why the subject, has the object there and then. The 'P' of the framework is centred on intelligence. This is foundation and aligns with intelligence led policing. The British Transport Police (BTP) adopted POSH in their officer CPD and it help raise the find rate from 33% to 45%.

		Record your POSH grounds	Key points	Examples	Are your grounds linked to		
					Subject?	Object?	Having the object now?
P O S H	Paint the Policing Picture <i>What is your Policing Picture?</i>	Paint the scene	Intelligence	Crimint ANPR Habitual knife carrier Briefing slide			
		What do you know?	Information	CAD Officer knowledge From Member of Public Location relevant Time/date relevant			
			Tasking	Daily tasking Predictive policing MPS/ local Priority S60 authority			
	Use your senses	Observe <i>What have you seen?</i>		Behaviour	Deviations from baseline Hiding Looking into vehicles/premises Following people		
			Clothing	Unseasonable or Inappropriate To hide identity or property Carrying suspicious bags or items			
			Restlessness Avoidance Physical signs	Fidgeting, pacing Avoid/ hide from Police Sweating, panting.			
Smell			Petrol Paint Drugs				
Hear <i>What have you heard?</i>		Q&A's	Evasive to questions about ...				
		Noises	Broken glass Alarms				
		Voices	Conversations Shouts				

Other police forces are using SEE, KNOW, SUSPECT however the CoP have no data showing impact of this model.

## Grounds recording

West Yorkshire use the See, Know, Suspect model for grounds recording. Initially a South Yorkshire Police model, the use of Pronto handheld device software allows the officer to record the grounds in a 3 part model which is combined to form the grounds for the stop search encounter.

**SEE: Officer Observations:** The primary reason for the stop and search will usually be the behaviour of the subject as observed by the officer. (this can include events "seen" by a third party such as a witness or CCTV operator).

**KNOW: Information/Intelligence received** In most circumstances there will be information that supports the officers decision to search. This information should be specific, recent and relevant.

**SUSPECT: Officer Suspicions prior to search:** Officers should articulate clearly what suspicion they have formed to justify the search. This link to what the officer has seen and the intelligence known to them.

Grounds sufficient enough to lawfully and genuinely suspect an item will be found based on reasonable objective factors and what you have seen or been told. (Avoid disclosing operational intelligence i.e. do not say vehicle has drugs ANPR marker/witness details, these grounds could be read by the subject)

Observations (What actions or behaviour were observed by the officer or a third party that influenced the decision to search?)\*

Information/intelligence (What information or intelligence was known that along with observations, influenced the decision to search? If intelligence is restricted or sensitive record as a separate e-PNB entry.)\*

Suspicion prior to search (What suspicion did you form to justify the search?)\*



Both are notable practice but unevaluated by the CoP.

## The Tactical Lead S&S Role

The force Tactical Lead has **achieved a lot** and is sustaining several areas within S&S on top of other full-time commitments – **this is excellent work and worthy of**

**note.** The concern however is single point of failure, lack of resilience and the ability to scale this intensity if volume increases. The tactical Inspector was not available at the time and the CoP team did not explore the workload volumes. The Tactical Lead enjoys overlapping ownership with the Legitimacy Co-Ordinator. This police officer and police staff mix, covering operational and people side together, appears to offer **enhanced value than other S&S structures – especially ethically and legitimacy**. The tactical lead was known by name in all contact we had in every focus group. **This is visible leadership**. The legitimacy coordinator remains connected to the front line with conducting ride along and being part of training delivery. This was reflected through in her strong working operational knowledge and ability to **recognise officer perspectives**.

## Focus Group Findings

The focus groups ranged from new in service, cross rank, and volume users. There was **confidence around use of S&S** and **strong supervisory support**. There were concerns a **minority of trainers had warned against using the power** which left some new officers wary of S&S. Officers enjoyed being paired with proactive units to use the power. #TheConversation, despite being innovative and well intentioned, had not landed as intended with officers feeling like they were being accused of unconscious bias, but this fear appeared to be from a lack of understanding by officers. The Chief Inspector spoken with said the conversations were challenging to frame and pitch to officers. There was a broad fear of complaints and being over scrutinised. Officers were loathed that colleagues in roles which may afford time to be proactive were **not challenged about failing to use S&S, despite being outliers**. Officers did not appear to be aware of the S&S training videos which could act as bite size refreshers. They accepted scrutiny was required and had lifted standards – with recognition from the Tactical Lead being celebratory but also causing them concerns, with the mention of arrests not receiving such oversight. All practitioners spoken to were not **confident in how to weave intelligence** within their grounds in a safe way which balances indicating they are intelligence led in the grounds but not revealing inappropriate details within a public facing record.

**Consideration:** #TheConversation is innovative and the delivery by a Chief Inspector ensures consistency. Support around structuring the conversation using feedback from practice and checking understanding could improve how it lands.

**Consideration:** A thematic exploring use of intelligence within the grounds to identify trends and feed this into learning. A standardised framework, like POSH or SEE KNOW SUSPECT, could support this.

## Procedural Justice in S&S encounters

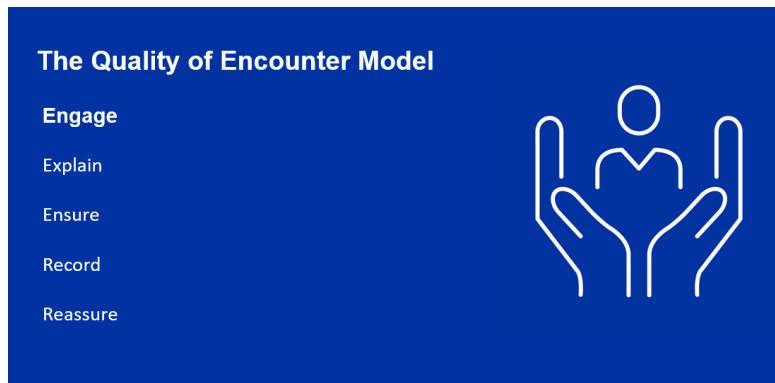
Procedural justice is explored robustly within the supervisory reviews and external scrutiny – with the importance of effective communication and ensuring procedural justice largely understood in the focus groups. **This is a strong area by Cambridgeshire.** To help sustain a standard going forward a model could be used to support consistency and clarity with officer and supervisory expectations.

**Considerations:** A model to assist with determining what makes a good procedural justice encounter could offer consistency and promote operational understanding around Cambridgeshire's expectations.

## Examples of good practice

For several years, the Met have used a Quality of Encounter Model - 'EEERR' which gives officers a frame work to ensuring that 'GOWISELY' is just the start point of a S&S encounter – ensuring officers first engage with the person, then explain what they are doing / what is going to happen, ensure the person understands, record the encounter correctly and finally reassure the person searched why S&S powers are used. This has been included in all S&S training streams and included on search forms etc. Alongside the highlight below – a full breakdown can be found in the accompanying PDF 'Q of E Mode 2023' (official marking).





Q of E model  
2023.pdf

Other notable practice included drives around ensuring Quality of Encounter by 'Stop and THINK', given yourself a moment to pause and remember the impact you could be having and importance of remaining professional and GOWISELY – 'R' with the R standing for respect.

## Scrutiny Panels

The Cambridgeshire scrutiny panels are run and energised by the local Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) which offers a good degree of independence from the police. It is acknowledged therefore that any comments or recommendations should likely be directed to the PCC as opposed the constabulary.

There is one panel operating which covers all of Cambridgeshire and has around 35 active members. The panel appears well run and panel meetings alternate between scrutinising police work on different themes – including stop and search, use of force and custody.

The **structure and use of scrutiny panels was positive**, and the opportunity was taken to meet both scrutiny panel members and the lead from the local PCC who runs and energises the panels. Members were **very helpful and enthusiastic around** the relationship and work with the police. Panel members felt confident they had the skills and training to effectively perform their role and felt confident that the

police were responsive to feedback or suggestions – providing **good evidence of closing the feedback loop from public scrutiny to the police.**

Both the panel chair and the PCC panel lead were aware that the recruitment and make up the panels is not as representative as the wider community and have been working towards redressing this. It was positive that Cambridgeshire police also recognised this and had been **proactively working on solutions including running mobile scrutiny workshops** with diverse communities across the county.

An initiative was noted whereby people who have been stopped and searched are offered a QR code to invite them to become involved in scrutiny work; although it was noted that uptake is often low, this is a **good example of work to diversify panel representation.**

**Consideration:** The panel self admittedly lacks diversity and lived experience. A separate initiative, perhaps with a partner organisation, could address this gap.

**Consideration:** To compliment the invitations provided by officers to people who are searched a view could be taken to invite complainants onto the panel.

### **Examples of good practice**

There are numerous approaches adopted by forces – some where the community monitoring groups are wholly independent of the police and invite the police as guests. Other forces have community and police co-production. Innovative practice include collaboration with University of Law, who run a reasonable grounds panel, and used sanitised material so no vetting is not required which removes a barrier to seldom heard and those who may have lived experience. The University of Law panel achieved 95% under 25 years of age and over 50% black and minority ethnic representation. This is explored in the CoP practice bank - [University of Law stop and search panel | College of Policing](#)

Work to produce national guidance on scrutiny panels is currently underway by the Home Office Police Powers Unit and CoP but will not be published in the short term.

## **Alignment of Ethics, Diversity, Equality and Inclusion to S&S**

There has been a strong drive around culture. The training material cites contemporary developments and reports – closely aligning Cambridgeshire to the issues relevant in S&S. This **is commendable as not every force has managed to achieve this**. The culture change is sponsored and given a priority despite competing demands. The effects of this were referenced in the context of S&S showing impact of this initiative.

## **Initial Training and Continuous Professional Development for S&S**

Cambridgeshire has different entry routes into the police for new recruits, all of which appeared to include a well thought out input on stop and search which is generally around 6 to 8 weeks into the training. There are further S&S inputs on PPST covering safe searching.

It is positive that practical exercises are also included within the training, sometimes utilising drama students as role-players to add a dimension of realism to the training – this includes both scenarios where the item is found, and also where the item is not found to allow officers to consider and practice how to end the encounter when the item is not found (this also allows officers to consider the procedural justice elements of S&S encounters – particularly when the item is not found).

Officers' recorded reasonable grounds from training exercises are reviewed in the same way as live stop and searches which enables officers to get early feedback on their formulation and recorded reasonable grounds.

Cambridgeshire have also paid careful attention to ensure that operational officers have ongoing training on S&S with a new bespoke package delivered in person each year covering a range of relevant topics.

Overall Cambridgeshire appeared to be **well equipped to train their officers in S&S** and it was particularly **encouraging to learn of the time and level of detail that goes into ongoing professional development for existing officers.**

## Concluding Remarks

- 1. Recognition of HMICFRS Outstanding:** Cambridgeshire Police should be highlighted for their robust governance, data-driven insights, and strong leadership in S&S. Their practices serve as a benchmark for other forces and demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement and adherence to high standards.
- 2. Sustainability and Resilience:** While the current S&S practices are outstanding, it is crucial to ensure that these can be sustained over time and are resilient to changes in volume or personnel. The force should consider strategies to mitigate the risk of a single point of failure and to maintain the intensity of their S&S efforts.
- 3. Enhancing Diversity and Inclusion:** Efforts to diversify the scrutiny panels and to incorporate lived experiences are underway, which is a positive step towards ensuring that the panels are representative of the community. The community scrutiny panel are impactful with numerous examples of the feedback loop is evident. Caution is advised about how to pitch #TheConversation but it is a noteworthy approach that shows promise provided officer's understanding is raised.
- 4. Training and Professional Development:** The training and continuous professional development for S&S are well-executed, with a mix of practical exercises and ongoing support such as 'Don't Stop Stopping'. It is important to maintain this high level of training and to address any concerns raised by individual recruit trainers to ensure consistent application of S&S powers.
- 5. Community Engagement and Feedback:** The initiative to involve individuals who have been stopped and searched in the scrutiny process is innovative and should be further encouraged. Additionally, inviting complainants to

participate in the panels could provide valuable perspectives and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the scrutiny process.

6. **Operational Considerations:** Practical considerations such as the development of a standardised framework for assessing reasonable grounds and the use of mobile devices to provide receipts for those stopped. Implementing these suggestions could enhance consistency and transparency in S&S encounters beyond the outstanding practice already identified.
7. **Procedural Justice and Models of Good Practice:** Adopting a model to ensure procedural justice in S&S encounters, such as the 'EEERR' framework and 'POSH' model used by other forces, could provide clarity and consistency in officer and supervisory expectations – especially in areas which lacked confidence such as use of intelligence in grounds.

In conclusion, Cambridgeshire Police's approach to S&S an exceptionally high standard, with a clear focus on governance, data analysis, leadership, and community engagement. The CoP's peer review has identified both strengths and areas for further development, which, if addressed, can serve to enhance the already outstanding practice. It is recommended that Cambridgeshire Police continue to build on their successes, address the considerations for improvement, and share their best practices with other forces through a CoP Knowledge Share Event. For forces with similar volumes and resources to focus on S&S they are a role model.

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## About the College

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Working together with everyone in policing, we share the skills and knowledge officers and staff need to prevent crime and keep people safe.

We set the standards in policing to build and preserve public trust and we help those in policing develop the expertise needed to meet the demands of today and prepare for the challenges of the future.

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