



**Police and Crime
Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys**

**Scrutiny Panel Dip
Sampling Exercise
Stop and Search - Vehicles**

Panel Members' Findings & Feedback

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1.0 Overview, Background, Purpose and Methodology

The Quality Assurance Terms of Reference, available on the OPCC's website <https://www.dyfedpowys-pcc.org.uk/media/khad1skc/qap-tor-final-2025.pdf> , states the background and purpose of the Panel along with how the dip sampling is carried out and what the Panel is asked to consider.

At the meeting of the Commissioner's Quality Assurance Panel held on the 19th January 2026, a random selection of vehicle stop and search incidents were considered by the Members. Members considered a selection of Stop and Search forms and their accompanying Body Worn Video Footage. The Panel reviewed 6 Stop and Search incidents.

A Specialist Operations Trainer who delivers training to newly recruited police officers on Stop and Searches briefed the Panel beforehand on procedures. This included information on the three most common pieces of legislation used to conduct a stop and search namely:

Section 1 Police and Criminal Evidence Act – [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984](#)

Section 23 Misuse of Drugs Act – [Misuse of Drugs Act 1971](#)

Section 32 Police and Criminal Evidence Act – [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984](#)

During the input the officer spent time emphasising that all Stop and Searches should follow GOWISELY:

- **G**rounds – reason for the search
- **O**bject – what is being searched for
- **W**arrant card – if not in uniform
- **I**dentify – officer name & collar number
- **S**tation – officer's base
- **E**ntitlement – copy of the record
- **L**egal power – legislation being searched under
- **Y**ou – explain you are being detained for a search

2.0 Executive Summary

In total, the Panel reviewed 6 Stop and Search Incidents.

Positive Feedback

- Members found it positive that during two searches items were found that justified the stop and search.

Areas for Improvement

- From viewing the searches there does not appear to be a consistent approach to how searches are conducted.
- Consideration is needed on the use of language and terminology used by officers during stop and searches. There needs to be a consistency of language and demeanour throughout the stop and search process to ensure that an individual is spoken to and dealt with in the same manner from the start of a search through to the end of the process.
- Should be mindful not to disclose personal data of others during a stop and search incident.

Members noted that supervisors have the opportunity to review the stop and searches and grade them against Red, Amber or Green (RAG) status. It was noted that 4 incidents were graded Green, 1 incident graded Amber and one with no supervisor review recorded. It was noted that this was because there was no Body Worn Video to view. Those graded Green fully meet expected standards and the one graded amber did not meet full expectations and the officer was de-briefed.

3.0 Review of Incidents

Incident 1

Circumstance

A car has been spotted driving at excess speed and swerving on the road by a mobile patrol. Individual has admitted taking a banned substance the previous evening and is arrested on suspicion of a section 4 Road Traffic Act Offence.

Drugs and Weapons found.

Positives

- It was positive that Officers did find a selection of items whilst undertaking the search.

Areas for Improvement

- There was no way of the Panel knowing whether GOWISELY was followed correctly as the BWV viewed started during the search.
- The Panel were unable to corroborate from the BWV why the vehicle was stopped.

Queries Raised

- Why were the times of the BWV different to the time recorded in the Stop and Search Record?
- Members questioned why this incident had been graded Green by the relevant supervisor when there were a few areas for improvement.
- The Panel felt that the search could have been more thorough. Whilst it was accepted that items of interest were found, the search could have been undertaken in a more methodical manner to ensure nothing was missed.

Incident 2**Circumstance**

Vehicle is seen leaving a location at 2am in the morning and a strong smell of cannabis is identified coming from the vehicle.

Drugs found during the search

Positives

- Members noted the handling of evidence was positive with the drugs that were found immediately placed in an evidence bag.

Areas for Improvement

- Members felt that the rationale on the stop and search record for stopping the vehicle was incorrect as it noted that there was a strong smell of cannabis coming from the vehicle when the officers first saw it. Members questioned whether it was possible to smell cannabis from inside of the police car.
- Members felt there was a need for Officers to be mindful of the language used when undertaking stop and searches to ensure it is appropriate.

Queries Raised

- Members asked whether the use of a community resolution for possession of drugs should have been instigated prior to a drug testing procedure? Also, the fact that the car had no tax, MOT or insurance should all offences be handled in totality before the resolution advised.
- Why were the times of the BWV different to the time recorded in the Stop and Search Record.
- It appeared to the panel that different officers were taking the lead on different offences and asked if this is normal procedure.

Incident 3**Circumstance**

Officer has been at an address for a drugs search when an individual has made off from the property. As a result of a positive search at the address, it was suspected further items may be in the vehicle.

Nothing found.

Positives

- A thorough and methodical search of the vehicle, with the officers working together.
- GOWISELY explained clearly to the individual.
- Thoughtful when removing items from the car, ensuring they wouldn't be damaged.

Areas for Improvement

- Members were not clear whether the individual was offered the opportunity to be present at the search of the vehicle and wondered whether this should always be offered?

Queries Raised

- Members noted that Officers were using the torch light on their phones and wondered why small hand held or head torches are not provided by the Force?
- As this was a good example of a vehicle search, Members asked whether there is specific training provided on how to undertake a vehicle search?
- Why were the times of the BWV different to the time recorded in the Stop and Search Record?

Incident 4**Circumstance**

While carrying out a search at an address a car key from a suspect vehicle is located and a search is undertaken.

Positives

- There were no positive comments to make due to the absence of BWV.

Areas for Improvement

- Members noted that the Stop and Search Record noted this incident

was recorded on BWV but there was no BWV provided. They were advised that this was because the incident had not been categorized correctly and therefore the BWV had been deleted after 30 days.

Queries Raised

- Due to the absence of BWV Members asked how often this occurs and what impact does this have or could have on specific incidents?

Incident 5

Circumstance

An intelligence led stop on a vehicle that was linked to nominals in the area who have links? to the supply of controlled drugs.

Nothing Found

Positives

- Excellent rapport between the officers and those subject to the stop and search.
- Full explanation provided for the stop, GOWISELY explained clearly.
- It was felt that it was age appropriate and relevant language used during the search.

Areas for Improvement

- Whilst initially it was mentioned that the car was linked to "nominals" further on in the search an individuals name was mentioned and the panel felt that this possibly breached GDPR.

Queries Raised

- Is it normal to have three people involved in a stop and search? The Panel were unable to observe the search directly and queried whether it may be recorded on the other Officers BWV.
- Why were the times of the BWV different to the time recorded in the Stop and Search Record.

Incident 6**Circumstance**

Information received that a vehicle is being used by a drug user and is pulled over and a search undertaken.

Nothing found.

Positives

- A full explanation of the search was provided and GOWISELY was explained clearly.

Areas for Improvement

- There was no mention of the individual being able to receive a copy of the report.
- The Panel felt the Officer was impersonable at the end of the search once the drug swipe was negative.
- Why were the times of the BWV different to the time recorded in the Stop and Search Record

Queries Raised

- The search record states that the Force had information that the vehicle is being used by a drug user, but during the interview the Officer advises that it is part of the Christmas Drink/Drug Initiative.
- The Panel were concerned that whilst the individual's drug swipe tested negative for cocaine and cannabis the individual had admitted taking ketamine the day before. The Panel felt that at the time of the stop the officer believed the individual was under the influence so queried why they have been allowed to continue on their way.

4.0 Response to Queries Raised

Panel Members made the following observations:

Observations	Force Response
<p>In all the BWV footage observed the time stamp on the video was different to the times recorded on the Stop and Search record. Is there a reason behind this?</p>	<p>In respect of a disparity in times between the BWV footage and the Stop Search Record provided to the panel, the record is a sanitized version of the stop & search record and is generally taken from the Niche Occurrence.</p> <p>Frequently this time will differ from the BWV time due to the occurrence generally being updated later in an officer's shift when they return to the station. Accurate times matching those of the BWV footage are on the original stop & search records.</p>
<p>Members questioned why incident 1 had been graded as green when they felt there was a few key areas for improvement?</p>	<p>Supervisors are asked to grade the stop search encounter overall. They may or may not review the BWV footage while conducting the review. The grading is an opinion and may differ slightly from Supervisor to Supervisor, however each Supervisor should provide a rationale for their grading decision.</p> <p>Where clear issues are present and have not been identified then individual supervisors will be provided with constructive criticism and feedback accordingly.</p> <p>There is a dip sample process in effect in all BCUs where Inspectors are assigned records to dip sample – this will include a review of the supervisors grading etc and providing constructive feedback to supervisors.</p>
<p>In relation to incident 2, members asked whether the provision of a community resolution order should have been instigated prior to a drug testing procedure? Also, the fact that the car had no tax, MOT or insurance should all offences have been handled in totality before the community resolution provided?</p>	<p>Officers were dealing with different offences in this incident - Drugs Possession and Motoring Offences including alleged Drug Driving.</p> <p>The Motoring offences (No Insurance and No Mot) will generally be dealt with by the issue of a Traffic Offence Report at the scene which may lead to a fixed penalty notice / fine and penalty points which are handled by the Traffic Process Unit.</p> <p>The Alleged Drug Drive offence requires blood submissions for lab analysis which typically takes 3 to 4 months currently. As the Drugs Possession offence was suitable for what is known as "local resolution" by way of the issue of a community resolution, there is no merit in delaying this until the Drug Drive results are returned. If the matter was not suitable for a community resolution, then</p>

	consideration would be given to pending the matter and sending both to court at the same time.
Also, in relation to incident 2 it appeared that different officers were taking the lead on different offences and asked if this is normal procedure.	In respect of different officers taking the lead on different offences, there is no issue with this as different officers have differing skill sets and experience and may therefore divide the workload at an incident up accordingly.
Members noted that in two calls officers were using torches off their mobile phones to carry out the search and asked are they not provided with head or handheld torches.	All operational officers are issued with a small handheld torch as part of their personal equipment although the choice as to whether to use the issued torch or other means of illumination (such as the phone light) remains a personal choice for each officer.
Members noted that incident 3 should be noted for best practice in undertaking a search of the vehicle as it was done in a methodical manner with clear communication between the officers undertaking the search.	<p>This will be fed back accordingly – in terms of the additional query around whether training in vehicle search is provided to all officers:</p> <p>Members of our Force Specialist Search Team are highly trained in conducting “high assurance” vehicle searches however until recently there was no mandated training for all officers in relation to the conduct of effective vehicle searches and skills were developed “on the job” as it were following completion of initial training.</p> <p>It was recognized that this was a “skill gap” in training and as a result a new bespoke “vehicle search training package” was developed in conjunction with the Force Specialist Search Team and Police Search Advisors. This training input now forms part of all new recruits’ basic training.</p>
With regards to incident 4 and the lack of BWV, members questioned how often an incident is not categorized as stop and search and what impact does or can this have on specific incidents.	<p>Force policy on BWV use states that ALL stop search encounters must be recorded in full on BWV unless there are pressing reasons for not, which should be suitably recorded in writing. The policy also states that all such footage should be “categorized” by the officer, through the storage system (evidence.com) as “STOP SEARCH”. This will ensure that the footage is saved for a protracted period to enable any reviews etc to take place in the event of a complaint regarding the conduct of the search etc.</p> <p>It is each officer’s responsibility to categorize the footage, and in this instance, this was not done. As a result, the footage would be automatically deleted from the storage system after 30 days.</p> <p>I am unable to provide any statistics in relation to the query, however general compliance with the requirement to categorize and save footage is high.</p>

	<p>A slight increase in occasions where officers have not categorized footage has been noted in recent months, however to address this a force wide bulletin has been sent out reminding all officers of the policy and procedure.</p> <p>In relation to what impact this would or could have, it would depend on the circumstances of the incident. If the subject of the search did raise any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the officers or the search, then the adverse impact could fall on the officers themselves as without the footage being available it would be far more difficult to refute any allegation of the search not being conducted correctly. Adverse impacts could generally be expected to be contained as above but there is obviously the potential effect on public confidence as well.</p> <p>If the matter involved criminal offences, then this could lead to a loss of evidence depending on the content of the footage.</p> <p>It is therefore important that footage is categorized correctly hence the force wide learning bulletin sent out and renewed focus on making sure the correct retention procedures are followed.</p>
<p>Is it normal practice to have three officers involved in a stop and search? The panel were unable to observe the search directly and questioned whether it would be recorded on the other officers BWV?</p>	<p>In respect of 3 officers being involved in a vehicle search, "best practice" in conducting a vehicle search is for 3 officers to be involved with one officer providing safety cover and supervising any vehicle occupants while the other two officers conduct the search of the vehicle.</p> <p>If more than one officer is involved in a search the expectation would be that all three officers would have BWV recording throughout the incident.</p>

<p>With regards incident 6 the panel were concerned that whilst the individuals drug swipe tested negative the individual had admitted to taking a banned substance the day before. The panel felt that at the time of the stop the officer believed the individual was under the influence so query why they had been allowed to continue on their way?</p>	<p>This would relate to two separate potential driving offences:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) S.5A Road Traffic Act (1988) – Over prescribed limit for drugs. 2) S.4 Road Traffic Act (1988) – Unfit through drink or drugs. <p>The officer in this instance appears to have stopped the vehicle and formed suspicion that the driver may be under the influence of drugs. He has then commenced a “preliminary impairment” test (Drug Wipe) at the roadside. This would generally be in line with accepted practice.</p> <p>Following this test there are no reasonable grounds to suspect that the subject has committed the S.5A offence due to the prescribed test used to form the reasonable suspicion returning a negative result.</p> <p>This leaves the potential S.4 offence. In relation to this the officer must form the opinion that the subject was unfit to drive as a result of alcohol or drugs. This is quite subjective and generally requires quite clear evidence of this “unfitness” which could include, un-steadiness on feet, swaying, slurred speech, confusion etc.</p> <p>If this is not present, then it is difficult to justify an arrest for S.4 especially following a negative Drug Wipe (although it is accepted that the Drug Wipe only detects Cocaine and Cannabis currently).</p> <p>Therefore the decision to arrest or not to arrest for S.4 offences is, as is the case with any arrest, solely a matter for the officer present at the time and a constable must make their own decision in terms of arresting (or not arresting) an individual and can not be ordered or instructed to do so by any other officer regardless of that officers rank.</p> <p>In this instance it appears that while the officer felt they were justified in requesting the roadside drug wipe they did not feel that there was sufficient information available to them to justify an arrest for S.4 following the negative Drug Wipe.</p>
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