



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP26/32

**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL –
10 JULY 2026**

**SUBJECT: USE OF POLICE POWERS IN SUFFOLK –
1 APRIL 2025 TO 31 MARCH 2026**

SUMMARY:

1. Stop and search volumes remained broadly stable, with a slight increase in positive outcomes and a reduction in arrest rates.
2. Disproportionality in stop and search remains highest for the Black ethnicity group but has reduced following increases in previous periods. The 'Other' ethnicity group has seen an increase, while Asian and Mixed groups remain relatively stable.
3. Stop and search activity is more concentrated in areas of higher deprivation.
4. Controlled drugs remain the most common object of search, accounting for approximately two-thirds of all searches.
5. Strip search volumes have reduced, although a higher proportion involves individuals from ethnic minority groups.
6. Recorded Section 163 vehicle stops increased significantly following improved recording practices.
7. Use of force remains stable, with disproportionate use affecting ethnic minority groups, though this reduces when considering children.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is asked to consider the progress made by the Constabulary and raise issues with the Chief Constable as appropriate to the PCC's role in holding the Chief Constable to account.

1. INTRODUCTION: USE OF POLICE POWERS – 1 APRIL 2025 TO 31 MARCH 2026

- 1.1 Delivery and Scrutiny Groups which oversee police powers, including stop and search, use of force, Section 163 vehicle stops, and Section 60 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act powers have been reviewed since November 2025 in preparation for, and following His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspections.
- 1.2 These groups provide structured oversight of data relating to the use of police powers, with a clear focus on community concerns, any indicators of disproportionality, and emerging trends. This approach ensures that both areas requiring attention and examples of good practice are consistently identified and addressed.
- 1.3 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) recently completed its inspection of the Constabulary, with findings due to be published in August 2026.
- 1.4 External scrutiny is provided by the Ipswich & Suffolk Council for Racial Equality (ISCRE). Trained and vetted ISCRE members review Body Worn Video (BWV) footage and provide direct, constructive feedback. This has proven highly valuable in identifying opportunities to enhance training, as well as recognising positive officer behaviour alongside areas for development.
- 1.5 From April 2026, increased funding has enabled a greater proportion of the use of police powers to be subject to external scrutiny, representing a positive step in strengthening transparency and oversight.
- 1.6 Safeguarding continues to be a central priority across the Constabulary. Enhancements to the digital stop and search recording platform now allow for more detailed capture of vulnerability and safeguarding considerations identified by officers. These records are subject to monthly review, supporting ongoing oversight and accountability.
- 1.7 The same approach applies to the recording and retention of Body Worn Video (BWV) for stop and search, as well as in the capture of Self-Defined Ethnicity (SDE). Alongside robust internal monitoring, officers are supported with practical tools, including pocket notebook cards outlining SDE categories. These resources assist officers in clearly presenting options to individuals and ensuring accurate, consistent recording.
- 1.8 Evidence demonstrates internal and external scrutiny indicates sustained improvements in data quality and officer behaviour.

Use Of Force

- 1.9 Public and Police Safety Training (PPST) is scenario-based training which includes a focus on the practical application of powers such as stop and search and the use of force within realistic contexts. Alignment to operational delivery plans enables external and internal scrutiny to identify training needs and improvements and translate these into training scenarios.
- 1.10 Officers annual training qualifications are monitored to ensure they do not deploy unless they have completed annual refresher training. Data is reviewed to identify trends including any officers whose use of force levels or incidents are outliers, ensuring appropriate review and oversight.
- 1.11 The Constabulary has identified Use of Force recording as an area for further improvement. Exploration of this has identified the existing recording system is less developed than the platform used for stop and search. Work is underway to align Use of Force recording with this

system, which will enhance officer compliance, data quality, strengthen supervisory oversight, and improve overall governance.

Body Worn Video (BWV)

- 1.12 Body-worn video (BWV) continues to play a key role in supporting officers in the delivery of their duties, while also underpinning effective scrutiny. Overall levels of officer compliance with activation and recording during stop and search remain strong.
- 1.13 Robust governance arrangements for BWV recording are embedded within the scrutiny process, reflecting clear public expectations around transparency and accountability. Each stop and search encounter is reviewed, with follow-up contact made with officers where necessary to ensure BWV is recorded and retained in line with Management of Police Information (MOPI) requirements.

Section 163 Road Traffic Act

- 1.14 Following the introduction of mandatory recording for Section 163 Road Traffic Act stops, there has been an increase in reporting. This new dataset will be closely monitored to ensure the power is used appropriately and proportionately.

Section 60 Criminal Justice And Public Order Act 1994

- 1.15 The Constabulary continues to monitor the use of Section 60 powers, which are designed to prevent and detect the carrying of dangerous instruments or offensive weapons. This power allows officers to conduct searches within a specified area and time period without the need for reasonable grounds. The use of Section 60 remains rare within the Constabulary, and it has not been utilised during the current reporting period.

2. OVERALL TRENDS - STOP AND SEARCH

Use of Stop and Search

- 2.1 Use of stop and search remains stable, with modest improvements in outcomes and continued focus on proportionality.
- 2.2 A total of 2,661 stop searches were conducted during the current reporting period. This represents a marginal increase of 0.5%.

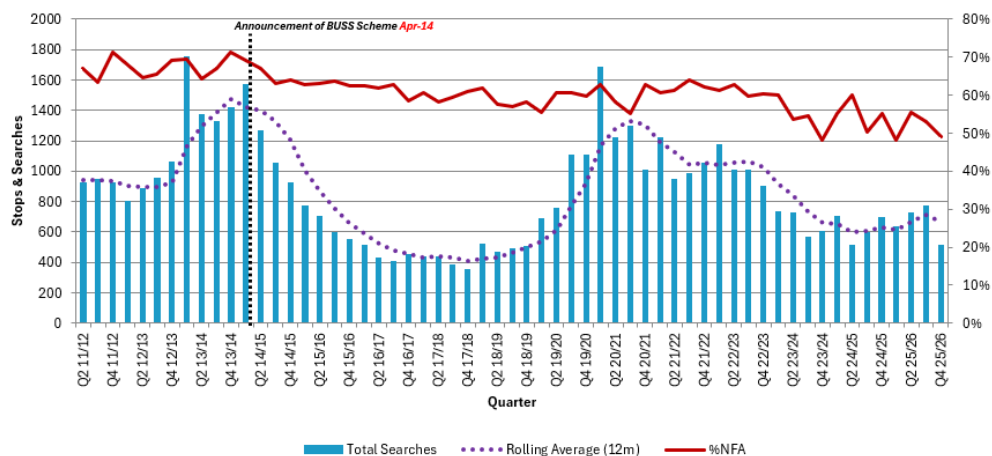


Figure 1: Long-term trends in use of stop and search in Suffolk

Figure 1 illustrates long-term trends in stop and search activity from 2011/2012 through to Q4 2025/2026. Following the pandemic, volumes showed a general downward trend, with some expected fluctuations observed in more recent periods.

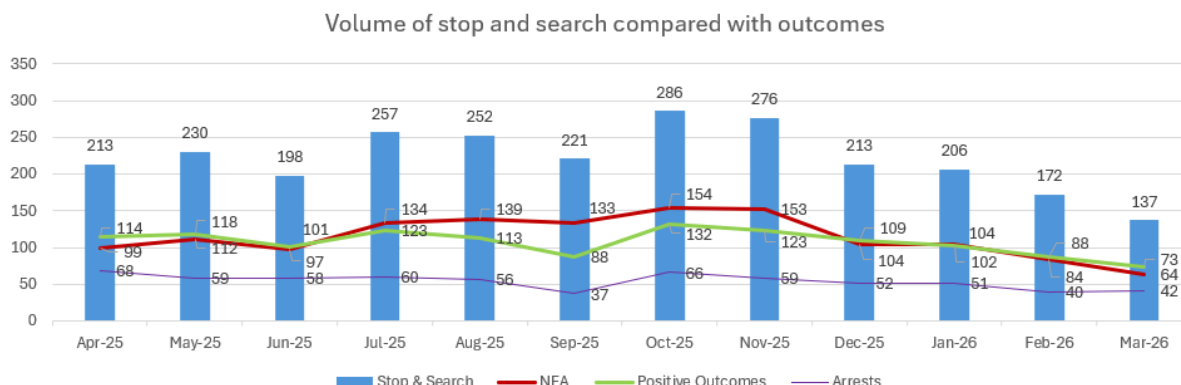


Figure 2: Monthly volume of Stop and Search compared with outcomes 01/04/2025 – 31/03/2026

2.3 Figure 2 highlights monthly activity levels alongside associated outcomes, including No Further Action (NFA), positive outcomes, and arrest rates.

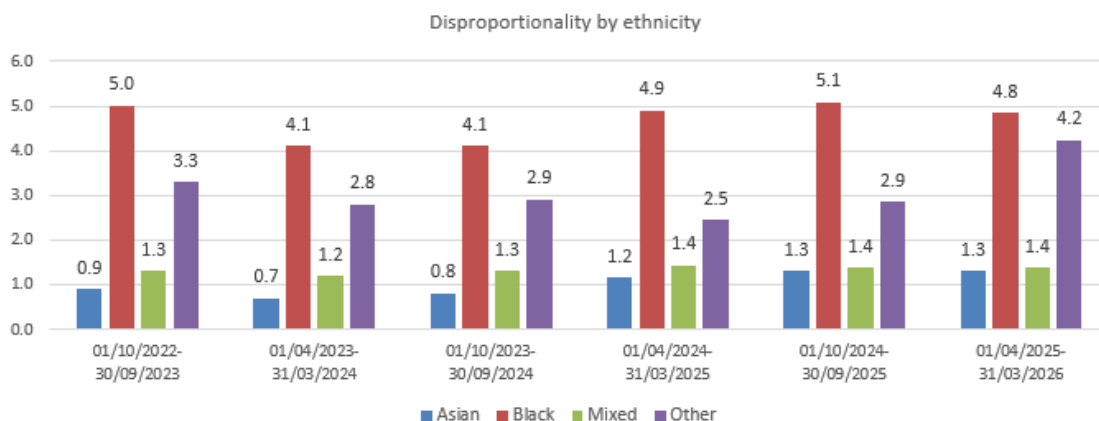
2.4 Positive outcomes (which include arrests) accounted for 48.3%, of which 24.4% resulted in arrest. The no further action (NFA) rate was 51.7%. Notably, the NFA rate decreased by 0.8 percentage points.

Proportionality – Ethnicity

2.5 Disproportionality persists across ethnic minority groups and remains a priority area, though recent trends indicate modest improvement in some groups.

2.6 Overall, the data reflects a stable and consistent use of stop and search powers, with slight improvements in outcomes and a clear evidence base to support continued focus on fairness, proportionality, and effective use of the power across all communities.

Figure 3: Disproportionality rates by ethnicity group and reporting period, 01/10/2022 – 31/03/2026



2.7 Disproportionality is measured using Suffolk population data from the 2021 Census. A value of 1 indicates parity.

- 2.8 In the current reporting period, individuals from ethnic minority groups were 2.4 times more likely to be subject to stop and search. This measure may be influenced by the inclusion of individuals who are not Suffolk residents and therefore should be interpreted alongside residency context.
- 2.9 This area continues to be subject to close governance and scrutiny, with a focus on understanding the underlying drivers of disproportionality and identifying opportunities for improvement.
- 2.10 Figure 3 shows disproportionality by ethnicity across the current and previous five reporting periods. In the latest period, disproportionality for the Black ethnicity group has decreased following two periods of increase, suggesting that recent oversight and focus may be contributing to improvement. Disproportionality for the 'Other' ethnicity group has increased and remains an area of concern. Rates for Asian and Mixed ethnicity groups remain close to parity and relatively stable.
- 2.11 In this reporting period, 28.6% of stop and search records did not include self-defined ethnicity. Improving data completeness remains an ongoing priority, as outlined earlier in this report.
- 2.12 Not all individuals subject to stop and search in Suffolk are residents of the county. As disproportionality is calculated using Suffolk population data, this can affect the accuracy of the measure.
- 2.13 In this reporting period:
- 12.4% (329 individuals) were recorded as non-Suffolk residents
 - 22.4% (595 individuals) had no address recorded
- 2.14 Among those with a recorded local address, 68.5% were recorded as White, while the Black ethnicity group had the lowest proportion of locally recorded addresses (53.6%).
- 2.15 When disproportionality is calculated using only those individuals confirmed as Suffolk residents, rates decrease across all ethnic minority groups.

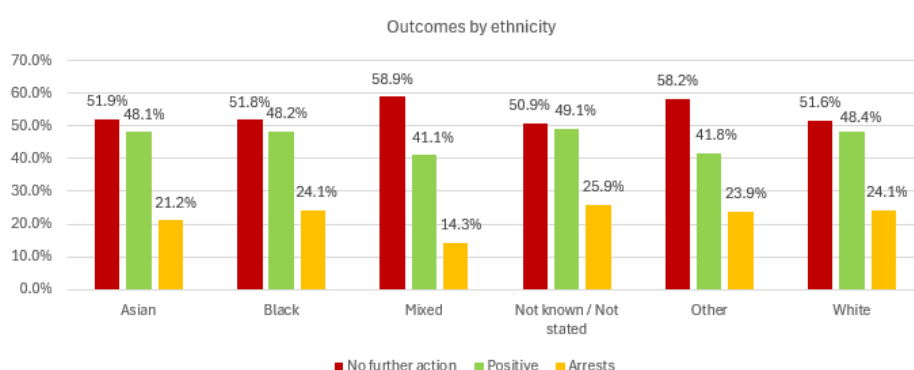


Figure 4: NFA, positive outcomes and arrests by ethnicity 01/04/2025 – 31/03/2026

- 2.16 Figure 4 presents the proportion of no further action (NFA), positive outcomes, and arrests in the current reporting period, disaggregated by ethnicity.
- 2.17 Outcome data by ethnicity shows that the positive outcome rate for white subjects was 48.4%, compared with 45.3% for ethnic minority groups. For individuals where ethnicity was not stated or was declined, the positive outcome rate was 49.1%. Arrest rates stood at 24.1% for white

subjects and 21.6% for ethnic minority groups. The NFA rate was 51.6% for white subjects and 54.7% for ethnic minority groups.

- 2.18 The highest rate of positive outcomes is observed in the 'Not known / not stated' group (49.1%), which also records the highest arrest rate (25.9%). The highest proportion of NFA outcomes is within the Mixed ethnicity group (58.9%).
- 2.19 Across the remaining groups, outcome rates are broadly consistent, with NFA outcomes accounting for approximately half of all cases and arrests ranging between around 21% and 24%.

District	Ethnic Minority Population*	Stop search count	Ethnic Minority stop search count	Disproportionality
Babergh	3073	203	15	3.2
West Suffolk	14792	683	45	1.1
Ipswich	21886	1025	188	2.1
Mid Suffolk	3238	192	13	2.8
East Suffolk	9433	538	24	1.6
Suffolk total	52422	2641	285	2.4

Table 1: Suffolk ethnic minority population, number of stop & search, and disproportionality by district

* As per 2021 Census, ONS

Geographic Considerations

- 2.20 Suffolk is divided into local authority areas which do not fully align with policing command boundaries. Table 1 presents rates of disproportionality for ethnic minority groups by district. A total of 20 searches were conducted outside the five local authority areas; therefore, the figures do not sum to the overall total of 2,661 stop and searches.

District-level Disproportionality

- 2.21 The highest rate of disproportionality is observed in Babergh district. However, both Babergh and Mid Suffolk have relatively low volumes of stop and search involving ethnic minority individuals, and these rates should therefore be interpreted with caution. Rates in low-volume areas should be interpreted with caution due to increased sensitivity to small sample sizes. West Suffolk remains close to parity and has shown a consistent pattern over time.

Deprivation and Stop and Search

- 2.22 Analysis of stop and search locations at Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) level, compared with Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) deciles, indicates a strong association between higher levels of deprivation and increased use of stop and search (Figure 5). Activity is concentrated in the most deprived areas (deciles 1 and 2), with substantially higher volumes than in less deprived areas.

Concentration in Most Deprived Areas

- 2.23 Of the 23 Suffolk LSOAs within the 10% most deprived nationally, 22 recorded at least one stop and search during the reporting period. This indicates a high level of operational activity in the most deprived communities.

Deprivation and Disproportionality

- 2.24 Individuals living in more deprived areas are more likely to be subject to stop and search than those in less deprived areas. However, within the most deprived LSOAs, individuals from ethnic minority groups were 1.6 times more likely to be searched than white individuals. This is lower than the disproportionality observed across the full dataset, suggesting that while deprivation

is associated with higher overall use of stop and search, does not fully explain disproportionality, indicating that additional factors contribute.

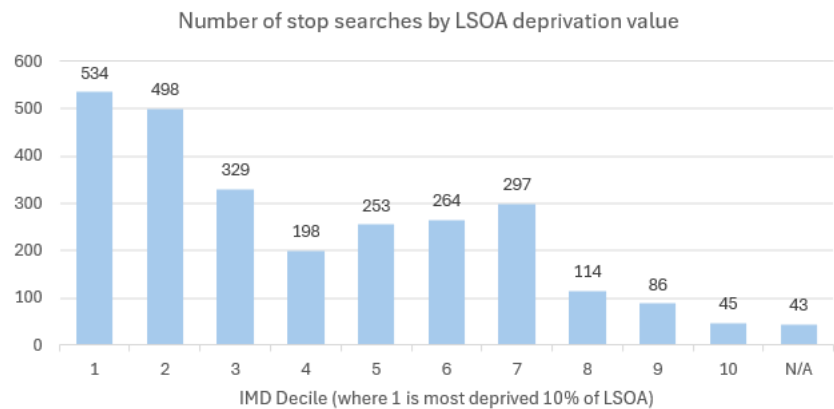


Figure 5: Stop searches according to Index of Multiple Deprivation LSOAs

Proportionality - Age

2.25 Disproportionality is lower among children, but small sample sizes limit reliability at group level. 411 individuals (15.4%) were under 18. This represents a slight decrease from 16.3% in the previous reporting period.

Age Group	Stop search count	Percentage of all stop search
10 - 14 yrs	134	5.0%
15 - 17 yrs	277	10.4%
18 - 24 yrs	706	26.5%
25 and over	1446	54.3%
Unknown	98	3.7%

Table 2: Count and percentage of stop search by age group, 01/04/2025 – 31/03/2026

2.26 Focusing on individuals aged under 18, those from ethnic minority groups were 1.3 times more likely to be subject to stop and search than white individuals. This includes all individuals, regardless of whether they reside in Suffolk.

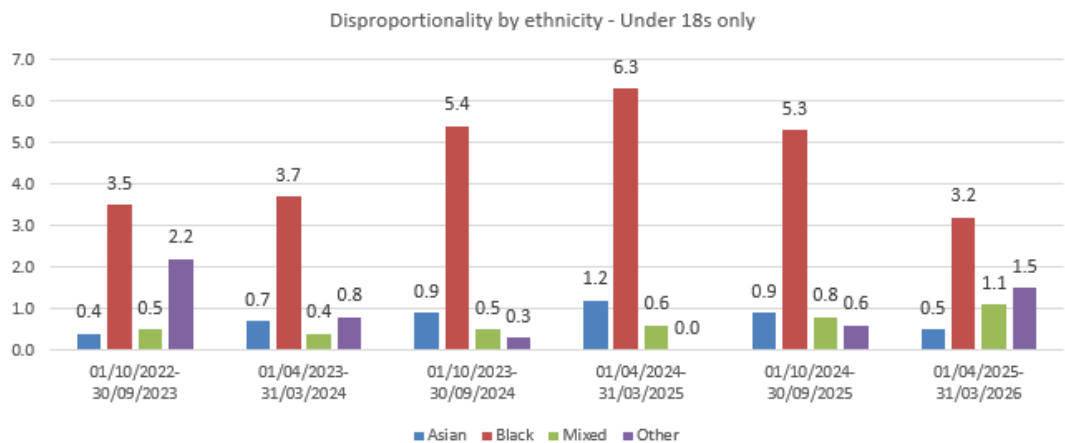


Figure 6: Disproportionality amongst under 18s by ethnicity, 01/10/2022 – 31/03/2026

Figure 6 shows disproportionality by ethnicity for under 18s across the current and previous reporting periods.

- 2.27 Disproportionality rates for ethnic groups within this cohort should be interpreted with caution due to relatively small volumes. These figures include all individuals aged under 18, regardless of residency.

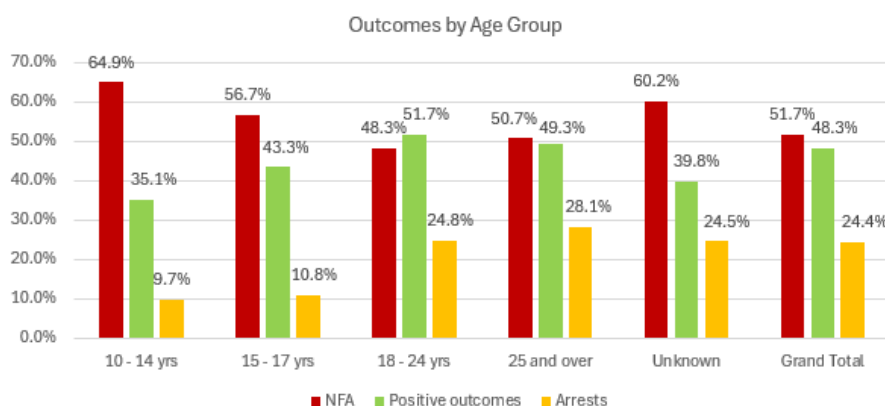


Figure 7: NFA, positive outcomes and arrests by age group 01/04/2025 – 31/03/2026

- 2.28 Figure 7 presents outcomes by age group. The highest rate of no further action (NFA) outcomes is observed among those aged 10–14, who also have the lowest arrest rate. The higher NFA rates for younger individuals align with a focus on minimising unnecessary criminalisation of children. Positive outcomes are most common in the 18–24 age group, while individuals aged 25 and over have the highest arrest rate.

Age group	Male		Female		Other / Not stated	
	Count	Age group as % of male total	Count	Age group as % of female total	Count	Age group as % of unknown total
10 - 14 yrs	118	5.3%	15	3.6%	1	4.3%
15 - 17 yrs	238	10.7%	39	9.4%	0	0.0%
18 - 24 yrs	603	27.1%	102	24.6%	1	4.3%
25 and over	1192	53.6%	250	60.2%	4	17.4%
Unknown	72	3.2%	9	2.2%	17	73.9%
Grand Total	2223	100%	415	100%	23	100%

Table 3: Stop searches by gender and age group, 01/04/2025 – 31/03/2026

- 2.29 In the current reporting period, 83.5% of stop and searches were conducted on males, consistent with the previous period (82.0%). Searches involving females accounted for 15.6%, while 0.9% were recorded as 'Other' or had no gender recorded.

Object of Search

- 2.30 Stop and search activity continues to be primarily focused on drug-related offences, with higher effectiveness rates in these categories.

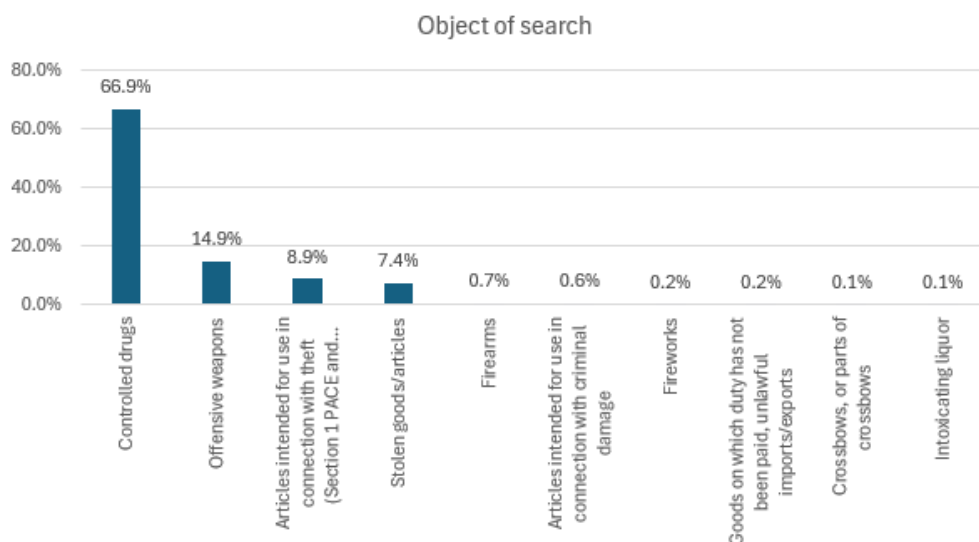


Figure 8: Percentage breakdown of Object of Search, 01/04/2025 – 31/03/2026

2.31 Figure 8 shows the distribution of stop and search by object of search. The majority of searches (1,781; 66.9%) related to controlled drugs. The highest volumes of these searches were conducted in Ipswich (669), followed by West Suffolk (477). Both areas have a Clear, Hold, Build locations where focussed activity continues with partner agencies including intelligence led operations.

2.32 Offensive weapons were recorded as the object of search in 397 cases (14.9%).

Object of search	Number of stop searches	Item searched for found	Find rate	Anything found (whether searched for or not)	Find rate for anything (searched for or not)
Controlled drugs	1781	613	34.4%	684	38.4%
Offensive weapons	397	73	18.4%	91	22.9%
Articles intended for use with theft	238	53	22.3%	76	31.9%
Stolen goods/articles	197	87	44.2%	99	50.3%
Others	48	13	27.1%	14	29.2%
Total	2661	839	31.5%	964	36.2%

Table 4: Volume of searches and Find Rates – by Object of search

2.33 The overall find rate for items being searched for was 31.5%. This rate is higher for searches relating to controlled drugs and stolen goods, and lower for other categories. In some cases, items not originally searched for were identified. When these are included, a total of 994 searches (36.2%) resulted in an item being found.

Use of Strip search

2.34 Strip search volume is low and decreasing, but proportional representation of ethnic minority individuals is higher than overall stop and search activity.

2.35 90 strip searches were conducted (↓9.1%) during this reporting period in the County. The majority (88; 97.8%) were undertaken in relation to suspected controlled drugs. One search related to offensive weapons and one to articles intended for use in theft.

Age group	Female	Male	Total
10 - 14 yrs	0	0	0
15 - 17 yrs	0	2	2
18 - 24 yrs	1	23	24
25 and over	6	58	64
Unknown	0	0	0
Total	7	83	90

Table 5: Number of strip searches by Age group and Gender

- 2.36 Most strip searches (83; 92.2%) were conducted on males. Two (2.2%) involved individuals aged under 18, with the youngest subject recorded as 16 years old.
- 2.37 A total of 19 strip searches (21.1%) involved individuals from ethnic minority groups. This represents an increase of 11 percentage points compared to the previous reporting period (10.1%). By comparison, 10.8% of all stop and searches conducted during this period involved individuals from ethnic minority groups.
- 2.38 In 42.2% of strip searches, the item being searched for was found. This increases to 47.8% when including searches where an item was found that was not originally being sought. These outcomes are consistent with the previous reporting period (42.4% and 47.5%, respectively).
- 2.39 Strip search, including those involving the exposure of intimate body parts, is subject to enhanced scrutiny to ensure compliance with legislation and policy. This is particularly important in cases involving children.

Self-defined ethnicity	Number of strip searches	Item searched for found	Find rate	Item not searched for found	Anything found (whether searched for or not)	Find rate for anything (searched for or not)
Asian	1	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%
Black	12	5	41.7%	0	5	41.7%
Mixed	3	2	66.7%	0	2	66.7%
Other	3	1	33.3%	0	1	33.3%
Not known / not stated	22	7	31.8%	0	7	31.8%
White	49	23	46.9%	10	28	57.1%
Total	90	38	42.2%	10	43	47.8%

Table 6: Total strip searches and Find Rates, by ethnicity

Use of Section 163 of the Road Traffic Act

- 2.40 Increased volumes reflect efforts aligned to improved recording and the introduction of the use of OPTIK rather than a confirmed rise in operational activity. The data should therefore be interpreted in the context of this recording change when making comparisons with previous periods.
- 2.41 Over the last 12 months, 10,301 vehicle stops have been recorded under Section 163, compared with 5,935 in the previous reporting period.
- 2.42 Figure 9 shows a marked increase in recorded stops from May 2025 onwards.

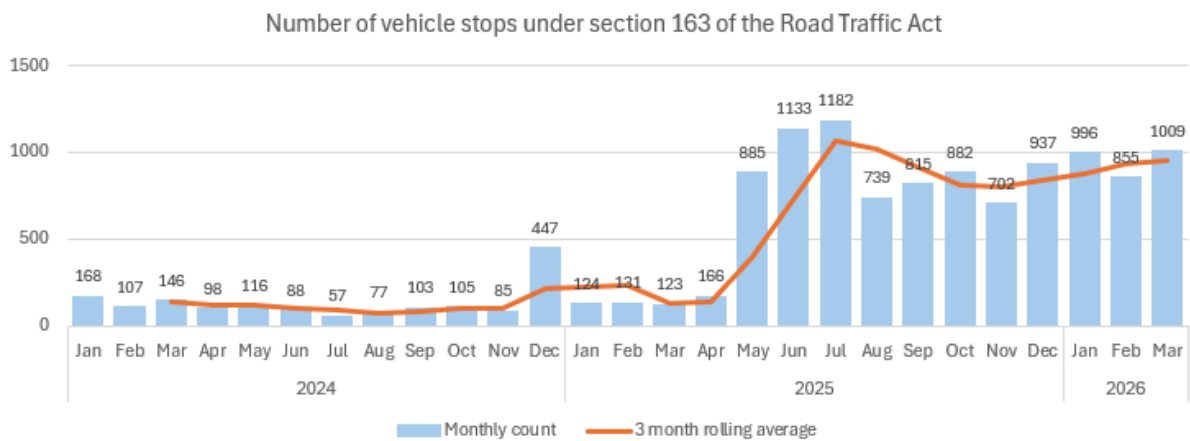


Figure 9 – Number of vehicle stops under section 163 of RTA

3. NATIONAL COMPARISON

- 3.1 The most recent national stop and search data available covers the year ending March 2025. As no updated national data has been published since the previous report, this section has been removed to avoid duplication. The Constabulary will incorporate updated benchmarking once new national data becomes available.

4. OVERALL TRENDS – USE OF FORCE

- 4.1 Use of force remains stable, with some disproportionality present, particularly for ethnic minority groups.

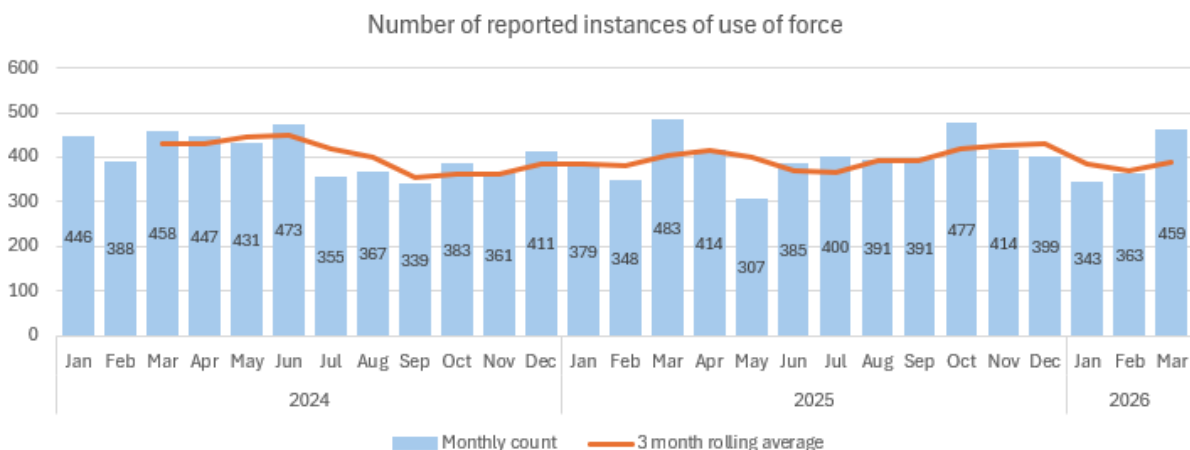


Figure 10: Number of reported instances of Use of force in Suffolk, 01/01/2024 – 31/03/2026

- 4.2 In the 12 months from April 2025 to March 2026, there were 4,743 recorded use of force incidents recorded (+1.9%) increase compared to the previous reporting period October 2024 to September 2025.
- 4.3 The most commonly recorded type of force was compliant handcuffing, accounting for 42.1% of all use of force submissions. Figure 10 shows that overall volumes have remained relatively stable over time, with some month-to-month variation.
- 4.4 In the current reporting period, individuals from ethnic minority groups had a disproportionality ratio of 1.8, children:1.4, indicating a lower level of disparity within younger age groups.

5. OVERALL TRENDS – CONDUCTED ENERGY DEVICE (CED) – TASER USAGE

- 5.1 CED use has increased slightly, with the majority involving non-discharge uses such as drawn or laser-dotted, 365 uses (+5.5%). These figures include all forms of CED use, not solely instances where the device was discharged.

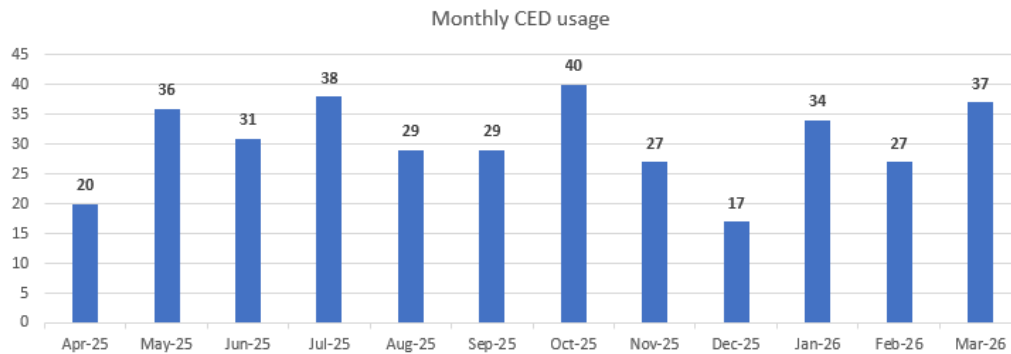


Figure 11: Monthly Conducted Energy Device (CED) usage 01/04/2025 – 31/03/2026

- 5.2 Figure 11 shows monthly usage, which remains relatively consistent overall, with some fluctuation across the year and a peak in October (40 uses).
- 5.3 The majority of CED use involved individuals recorded as White (92.9%), with 7.1% involving individuals from ethnic minority groups.
- 5.4 Figure 12 shows the type of CED use. Most instances involved the device being drawn (41.4%) or used in laser-dotted mode (41.9%), while fewer cases involved aiming (8.8%), arcing (2.2%), or discharge (5.8%).

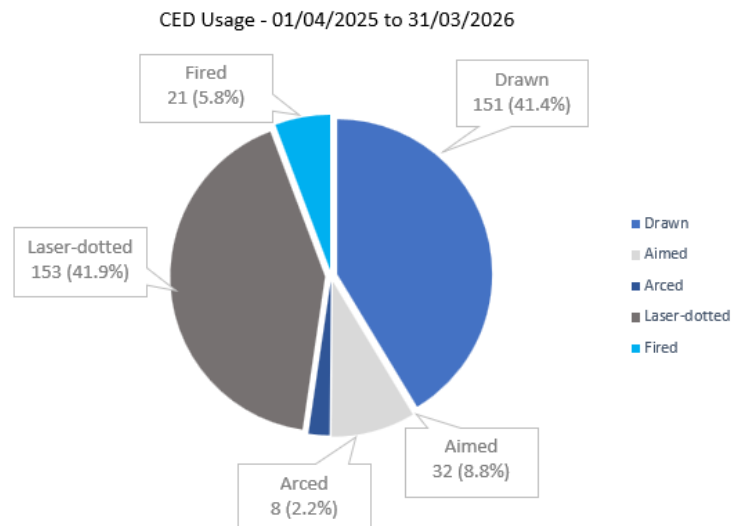


Figure 12: CED usage breakdown 01/04/2025 – 31/03/2026

6. INFORMATION PROVIDED BY ISCRE ON THEIR WORK TO ADMINISTER THE POLICE POWERS SCRUTINY GROUP

- 6.1 A report compiled by ISCRE detailing their work to administer the Police Powers Scrutiny Group is attached at Appendix A.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

- 8.1 There are no other implications or risks associated with this report.

9. CHIEF OFFICER CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The use of police powers across Suffolk remains stable and consistent, with no significant Increases in overall activity.
- 9.2 Disproportionality continues to be the most significant area of focus, particularly in relation to ethnicity. While there are signs of improvement in some areas, further work is required to better understand and address the underlying drivers of disparity.
- 9.3 Data quality has shown continued improvement, supported by enhanced scrutiny and governance processes. However, gaps remain particularly in the recording of self-defined ethnicity and improving completeness and accuracy of data will remain a priority.
- 9.4 Recent developments in recording practices, including the introduction of improved systems for capturing Section 163 vehicle stops, have strengthened transparency and oversight. These changes should be considered when interpreting trends and making comparisons with previous reporting periods.
- 9.5 Strengthening governance arrangements, coupled with internal oversight and independent external scrutiny, continue to support accountability, organisational learning, and ongoing improvement in the fair and proportionate use of police powers



Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality's Report on the Police Powers Public Scrutiny Group: May 2026

Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality (ISCRE) facilitates the Suffolk Police Powers Public Scrutiny (SPPPS). This includes the public scrutiny of police Use of Force, Taser Incidents and Stop/Searches.

ISCRE, with the community, has been scrutinising one element of police powers since 2009, police stop & searches. This was on the back of research undertaken in 2008 to investigate the causes of disproportionality against people from minority ethnic backgrounds, particularly people as visible colour being stopped and searched by the police.

Whilst we have seen significant improvements in the disproportionality reduced from 9% to 5%, it remains, not only in police stop searches, but also in the police Use of Force and Taser incidents. A decision was therefore made that scrutiny would be extended to wider police powers to include their Use of Force and Taser.

The purpose of the panel is to bring together members of the community and the police to discuss firstly, are the police using their powers fairly, secondly, why is disproportionality happening, and to look at what needs to be done to bring parity or proportionality in the way that Suffolk Police use their powers in stop searches, the Use of Force and Taser incidents.

Why Scrutinise?

Scrutinising police powers is essential for maintaining a fair and just society. It ensures that the police operate within the bounds of the law and with the consent of the public they serve. **Transparency** – Public scrutiny helps to improve transparency and better public understanding of how powers are applied appropriately according to official guidance and standards.

Accountability - Police officers have significant power. Scrutiny helps to ensure they use it appropriately and are held responsible for misuse.

Public Trust - When the public feels the police are fair and accountable, they are more likely to cooperate with investigations and feel safe.

Effectiveness - Scrutiny can identify areas where police practices could be improved upon, leading to more effective crime prevention.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

The MoU between Suffolk Constabulary, ISCRE and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk (OPCC) has been agreed for the period 2 year period between 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2028 to allow members of the local community to review individual police interactions with the public and to consider any disparity in use of wider police powers.

The reflections from the SPPPS group are that our observations and feedback are helping Suffolk Police to learn lessons from participants' lived experiences, thereby helping to improve services and ensure greater accountability.

The relationship between the SPPPS and the police continues to improve with individual police officers attending scrutiny panel reporting that it has helped them to use their powers more

confidently with the backing of the community. Members of the public feel they have a platform to challenge the police when they feel that they have not been treated fairly, which helps to build trust. Young people report that the group's work improves their understanding of how and why police powers are used in Suffolk.

ISCRE reviews a selection of Body Worn Videos prior to each scrutiny panel. There are still some challenges around the scrutiny process with unavailability of some body worn video footage. This is being worked through, and we hope to see improvements. Scrutinising body worn video has greatly improved the scrutiny process, as it provides the much-needed context around the event in a way that a report is not able to.

Training

Under the terms of the MoU, ISCRE will deliver a series of sessions to the police regarding the scrutiny of police powers. As an independent, external partner, ISCRE is uniquely positioned to share authentic accounts of communities lived experiences. These sessions highlight the profound impact on individuals and the wider community when the grounds for police actions are questioned due to their potential negative consequences.

The training has been highly engaging and interactive, with positive feedback from officers who report a significantly improved understanding of how their actions can affect individuals after hearing these personal stories.

Sessions were successfully delivered in 2025, on May 9th, May 23rd, June 6th and June 20th and September 2nd. Further sessions are being scheduled for 2026.

Use of Force & Taser Training – Observation Sessions for ISCRE Staff

ISCRE staff who are a part of the Suffolk Police Powers Public Scrutiny (SPPPS) scrutiny, have attended Use of Force and Taser training sessions and Suffolk Police Headquarters (HQ) as observers. This not only gave ISCRE valuable insight into the level of training that police officers are involved in, but it also helped ISCRE to be able to better support the community in its scrutiny processes with:

Improved understanding - ISCRE gained a deeper understanding of situations where force is necessary, the types of force available for use, and the decision-making process involved. There may also be situations where ISCRE staff can provide a valuable independent perspective on training scenarios and the appropriateness of force used. This scrutiny can help identify potential areas for improvement in training and policies.

Enhanced decision-making – Our new knowledge and understanding has led to better decisions when scrutinising incidents involving the use of force.

Increased trust and accountability – Having a better understanding of the realities of policing where force is used, has helped ISCRE understand the challenges police officers face, helping us develop greater trust in the training process and the decision-making of officers. This also increases accountability by providing the community with a better understanding of the standards and procedures in place.

Improved communication - Shared training experiences we believe has led to better communication and understanding between police officers and ISCRE staff, which helps to reduce misunderstandings in the public scrutiny process.

Potential to reduce complaints - Having a better understanding of the circumstances in which force is used can help ISCRE to share the information with the community at scrutiny meetings, helping to reduce complaints through a lack of understanding or awareness.

Improved policies and procedures – ISCRE, with this training, can provide valuable insights into the development of policies and procedures related to the use of force from the public perspective.

On September 2, 2025, ISCRE attended a training session on reviewing Body Worn Videos (BWVs) where a Taser was deployed. This training directly enhances our ability to perform independent scrutiny of police actions.

Taser deployment is a significant use of force. By understanding the context, training, and legal justification behind it, ISCRE can more accurately assess whether an officer's actions were necessary, proportionate, and lawful. Watching these videos and having discussions with the police allowed ISCRE to better understand the complexities of human factors in high-stress situations.

While valuable, BWV footage can be subject to hindsight bias. Understanding how things like tunnel vision, attention focus, and the stress of a situation can affect an officer's perception is essential for fair scrutiny. This allows ISCRE to avoid oversimplified judgments and provide accountability that is grounded in the realities of frontline policing. Furthermore, we can balance this with the identification of potential biases or disproportionality in how Tasers are used, especially against minority ethnic groups, which is a key focus for ISCRE.

Public Scrutiny Meeting held May 27th

Attendance: - 13

Venue: - Via Teams

Stop & Search	There was a total of 404 stop and search forms, and out of that we selected the following, to audit: W1 – 20 out of 196 forms BAME – 12 out of 37 forms White Other – 6 out of 57 forms Ethnicity Not Stated – 11 out of 114 forms
Use of Force	94 Samples – Reviewed down to 10 samples with more detailed analysis, 2 taken to panel for further scrutiny.
Taser	69 Samples – Reviewed down to 3 samples with more detailed analysis, 1 taken to panel for further scrutiny.

Public Scrutiny Meeting held March 2026

Attendance: - 19

Venue: - Online via Microsoft teams

Stop & Search	There was a total of 483 stop and search forms, and out of that we selected the following, to audit: • W1 – 20 out of 202 forms • BAME – 16 out of 49 forms • White Other – 8 out of 81 forms Ethnicity Not Stated – 11 out of 114
Use of Force	167 Samples – Reviewed down to 10 samples with more detailed analysis, 2 taken to panel for further scrutiny.
Taser	52 Samples – Reviewed down to 3 samples with more detailed analysis, 1 taken to panel for further scrutiny.

Public Scrutiny Meeting held January 2026

Attendance: - 19

Venue: - Online via Microsoft teams

Stop & Search	There was a total of 610 stop and search forms, and out of that we selected the following, to audit: • W1 – 28 out of 279 forms • BAME – 22 out of 67 forms • White Other – 6 out of 63 forms Ethnicity Not Stated – 20 out of 201
Use of Force	182 Samples – Reviewed down to 10 samples with more detailed analysis, 2 taken to panel for further scrutiny.
Taser	55 Samples – Reviewed down to 3 samples with more detailed analysis, 1 taken to panel for further scrutiny.

Key Points:

Disproportionality

While there is progress collectively made over the years in tackling disproportionality, it is however disappointing that we are still to achieve parity between Suffolk's minoritised community and their white counterparts. The last two reporting periods have seen increases in disproportionality in the use of stop search powers. The Use of Police Powers in Suffolk report to 30 September 2025 shows that Black people (all addresses) are **5.1** times more likely to be stopped and searched, **5.6** times more likely to be searched for controlled drugs and **6.5** times more likely to be handcuffed during controlled drug searches. According to the same report, young Black people under the age of 18 are **7.2** times more likely to be searched for drugs than their white counterparts. Failure to address this will not only reduce public trust in the use of police powers but undermine the good work being done and negatively impact community cohesion. We believe an example of this disproportionality can be seen from a case example in March.

Case study

The SPPPS panel in March raised concerns regarding whether an officer had racially profiled an individual who was alleged to be smelling of cannabis. The individual was singled out in a store, followed to his place of work, and subsequently searched, along with his work vehicle. It was later established that he was not the person responsible for the strong smell of cannabis as reported.

A complaint was submitted to the police, who concluded that officers had acted appropriately. However, the case was referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), which determined that *"the outcome of Suffolk Constabulary's investigation into the complaint was not reasonable and proportionate. Therefore, the application for review is upheld."* The IOPC found no evidence of racial profiling however there were failings within the stop/search.

The panel questioned the capability of the Professional Standards who had, erroneously, not identified any wrongdoing in the officers' actions. The public needs to have confidence that, should things go wrong, there is a competent body that will review processes fairly. This case highlights concerns about accountability and has the potential to further diminish public trust and confidence in policing.

A number of actions were recommended by the March SPPPS meeting, and they are in the process of being implemented.

Poor Recording and a Lack of Supervisory Oversight

We continue to observe instances where some officers have not fully recorded the grounds for a search, or the stated grounds do not completely cover all aspects of GOWISELY.

There have been occasions where supervisory oversight was insufficient or not robust enough to assure public confidence in the police's internal checks and balances. We consider it good practice when a supervisor identifies issues and clearly records what occurred. We have also noticed instances where supervisors have signed off on grounds without comment or any clear sign of accountability for the officer's failure to record clear grounds or fully address GOWISELY.

Supervisory oversight is an integral part of ensuring that policing is being carried out equitably across diverse communities, protecting vulnerable groups and minimising systemic bias. When the public is confident that Suffolk Police have rigorous supervisory and inspection frameworks in place, trust in police legitimacy increases.

Police Intelligence

During this reporting period, it was noted that officers frequently cite "recent intelligence" in their grounds without specifying how recent it is. In some instances, this intelligence was several months old, conflicting with the guideline that 'recent' refers to information under 3 months old. This issue was discussed during the January and May Suffolk Police Powers Public Scrutiny (SPPPS) meetings, following an action item from January's meeting for clarity and officers to action. There is need for clear guidance to be provided to officers on what constitutes 'recent intelligence' to avoid the current situation.

Use of Force

The panel continue to challenge examples of police use of force, specifically addressing cases where some suspects were automatically handcuffed. In these instances, the panel seeks to understand the specific rationale behind the immediate application of restraints. Our objective is to ensure that officers adhere to the principle of proportionality, where use of force, including handcuffing, is demonstrably necessary and justified by the circumstances, rather than a default action. Whilst acknowledging that officers have to assess every individual case on its own merits, the panel notes that often officers have dealt with seemingly similar cases in different ways depending on their own confidence and experience, thereby creating inconsistency in outcomes.

Body Worn Video (BWV) Review

Availability of BWV sometimes still remains a challenge for us to review. We hope to get to a place where any video selected for scrutiny will have the accompanying BWV to review. For this reporting period, BWV's were reviewed on 15th January, 19th March and the 14th May.

Facial Recognition

The group has expressed, concern about and if facial recognition is rolled out locally, particularly in terms of, if there is any disproportional or unfair targeting of people from certain communities. It was noted that Essex Constabulary have paused facial recognition because it identified that there is bias when it comes to identifying black men and women. At the SPPPS meeting in May, Becky Mears also updated that the original vans are no longer operational; there are new vans with improved facial recognition cameras capturing biometric data which has been analysed and assessed as unbiased. However, all identifications still require police officer verification. The group will be further updated on this subject as required.

Police Powers Public Suffolk Scrutiny Dates in 2026:

- July – Wednesday 29th **In Person** - ISCRE Office
- September – Wednesday 30th **In Person** - Abbeygate 6th form college Bury St Edmunds
- November – Wednesday 25th

Sharon Lee - ISCRE