

March 2025

(This document is also available in Welsh)



Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys

Scrutiny Panel Dip Sampling Exercise Stop & Search

Members' Findings & Feedback

March 2025

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1. Overview, Background, Purpose and Methodology

The Quality Assurance handbook, available on the [PCC's website](#), states the background, purpose and methodology of the Panel.

On the 26th of March 2025, Quality Assurance Panel (QAP) members met at Dyfed Powys Police Headquarters to review a selection of Stop & Search incidents involving adults and juveniles. The Panel were asked to scrutinise a selection of Stop and Search forms and their accompanying Body Worn Video footage.

A Police Sergeant (PS) from the Roads Policing Unit (RPU) who has provided inputs on Stop & Search (S&S) and Use of Force (UoF) for other scrutiny panels such as the [Independent Advisory Group](#) and the [Youth Ambassadors](#), delivered an input on the acronym GOWISELY:

- **G**rounds – reason for the search
- **O**bject – what is being searched for
- **W**arrant card – if not in uniform
- **I**ntity – 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

This acronym GOWISELY would form the basis of the Panel's understanding in evaluating one of the primary focuses of the day which was to assess whether officers had appropriate grounds to conduct their search. Officers are required to memorise GOWISELY as and when they perform a S&S.

To compliment this, the PS also provided an input on the powers police have to conduct a S&S which included a briefing on section 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) and section 23 of the Misuse Of Drugs Act.

In addition to the above, the Chief Inspector for S&S and UoF also provided an input in relation to the data for the period of February 2025. Within the input it was discussed that:

- 272 searches were conducted with a 30% success rate for finding targeted items. In comparison to February 2024, whereby 337 searches were conducted with 23% of success of finding targeted items.
- 98% of officers had Body Worn Video (BWV) recording throughout the search. Those who did not are suspected to be officers in plain clothes who do not have the facility to wear a BWV camera.

To aid the Panel they were provided with pre-read material consisting of:

- The GOWISELY acronym.
- The previous QAP report on S&S in May 2024.
- Redacted S&S forms of the adults and juveniles assessed on the day.
- The OPCC feedback form template for written Panel observations.

The Panel were asked to assess:

1. Whether the grounds recorded were proportionate for the stop and search to be conducted.
2. At the end of the meeting, how they would compare the service provided by the police between Adults and Youths?

2. Executive Summary

Overall, the Panel reviewed eight S&S records.

Positive feedback:

- The Panel noted that GOWISELY was followed in all records reviewed but questioned whether future Learning and Development should address an over-reliance on process rather than responding to the public.
- The Panel observed no difference in the treatment of BWVs between adults and juveniles but felt juveniles should receive more consideration.
- The grounds for 5 of the 8 records viewed were deemed proportionate.
- In 6 of the 8 records viewed, the Panel determined that staff were courteous and clear to subjects of S&S.

Areas for improvement:

- More consideration should be applied for children who are subjects of S&S. The Panel suggested that to improve their safeguarding that GOWISELY could be adapted for children and incorporate the inclusion of notifying the parents/legal guardians post the search being conducted.
- Too much inconsistency and inaccuracy with the manner that the S&S forms are completed.
- Records 7 & 8 were a particular concern for the Panel in relation to the attitude, language, and tone of the officers conducting the search.
- Some confusion over some of the supervisory notes provided to those records that received a pass which the Panel had concerns for.

3. Review of Stop and Search Records

Record 1 – (Adult)

Police have been called to an intoxicated male banging on the door of a tavern stating that his phone was inside. Male has left prior to police attendance and was witnessed trying the doors of the properties of the local residence. The individual was stopped under S1 PACE, matching the description provided.

Positives

- The grounds for the search were proportionate.
- Officers displayed good conduct with the subject. Good clear instructions, rationale provided and were courteous throughout.
- GOWISELY was heard being used; although, no warrant card was shown to the subject.
- The subject did not provide clear answers and appeared to evade questions when prompted. Officers showed good patience and persistence in their questioning.

Areas for improvement

- Officers checked under hat without the subject's permission. This would appear contrary to the search technique acronym JOG (Jacket, Outer Garment and Gloves) which relates to the requirement of the permission of the subject to remove any of these items, as this exposes skin to the officers conducting the search.
- The Panel were uncertain whether handcuffing the subject was necessary given that their demeanour was compliant; however, other members specified on revising the form they believed that this was proportionate and recorded accordingly to prevent the subject from fleeing the scene. However, the Panel did specify that the purposes of being handcuffed was not specified to the subject throughout the BWV recording.

Queries raised

- Do officers need to provide a warrant card if they are wearing a uniform?
- Are emails for receipt of a S&S appropriate means of disclosing given that the email address provided cannot be verified unlike a home address and therefore, would this be permitted under GDPR?

Record 2 – (Youth)

Police were called to a disturbance of a group of youths trying to break into a door. They were stopped under S1 PACE due to matching description provided.

Positives

- Grounds for the search were proportionate and GOWISELY was clearly used.
- Officer showed a lot of patience and displayed courteous answers to the juveniles despite their demeanour considered challenging and rude.
- Officer noted head injury to the subject and appeared to show necessary concern, also enquired about the juvenile's eyes appearing to be dilated.
- A female officer, accompanying the officer who's BWV was being observed, was subject to a sexist remark and handled the situation professionally.

Areas for improvement

- When officers arrived to support the lead officer, the Panel noted that two officers communicated with the subject, which they found confusing and wondered whether this was standard protocol.

Queries raised

- Is there a procedure for when subjects should be cuffed to the rear?
- The Panel noted that two officers communicated with the subject simultaneously which they found confusing and wondered whether this was standard protocol?

Record 3 – (Adult)

Two individuals noticed the police and appeared to turn their heads and walked in the opposite direction. The subject was stopped under S.23 of the Misuse of Drugs Act

Positives

- The Panel noted that during the BWV, a member of the public came to meet the officers, conducting the S&S, specifying that the individuals were loitering or attempting to enter their premises on 3 occasions. Officers specified that they suspected that the subjects of the search had attempted to enter these premises to avoid being searched; therefore, the subjects would have been aware of the legislation to conduct a S&S, which could add to the officer's grounds of suspicion. However, this was not noted in the S&S form.

Areas for improvement

- The Panel were unanimous in believing that the grounds specified in the forms, and from what they witnessed in the BWV, were not considered proportionate for a S&S. The Panel suspected that the individual was deemed suspicious due to potentially officers being aware of them being a drug user previously. When justifying the grounds, the officer specified that it was due to them behaving suspiciously.
- Objects found on the individual were prescribed medication.
- Whilst the subject was in accompaniment with someone else, they did not appear to have been searched.
- It did not appear that GOWISELY was followed.
- Officer's attitude did not come across courteous or clear, but distrusting and pessimistic during their interaction with the subject when discussing that he had a prescription for the drugs on his possession.
- The Panel had concerns that a supervisor has overseen this record and deemed it acceptable.

Queries raised

- The Panel queried whether the suspicion, based on the officer's perception of an individual moving away from them intentionally, are sufficient grounds to conduct a search?
- What is the current process and procedure of supervisory quality assurance checks of these S&S?

Record 4 – (Youth)

Officers attended a call in relation to loud music being played. On arrival they discovered a smell of cannabis emitting from the youths. The youths were searched under section 23 of the Misuse of Drugs Act.

Positives

- GOWISELY was followed and the form completed was considered by the Panel as best practice. The grounds specified for the search were proportionate and clearly communicated to the youths.
- Officers displayed excellent rapport with the youths whilst also remaining professional.
- The Panel noted that the Supervisor comments provided were more accurate and more detailed than other records seen previously.

Areas for improvement

- Officers found a 'Grinder' within the BWV; however, within the form submitted, it states that nothing was found.

Queries raised

- A Panel member queried could the youths have been asked to show their pockets instead of proceeding with a lengthy person search?
- Given there were three youths searched, it was not clear which the form was specifically referencing and the Panel pondered whether this was written in a manner that was generic and non-specific to any individual.

Record 5 – (Adult)

Officers had information to suggest the male was in possession and supplying class A controlled drugs from their location. On attendance whilst executing the S.23 Misuse of Drugs warrant on the address, officers have located a controlled substance on the living room table.

Positives

- GOWISELY had been conducted and the grounds were considered proportionate.

Areas for improvement

- On the form it states that no force was used; however, the subject was handcuffed to the rear. The subject was seen looking uncomfortable with the tightness of the handcuffs; and whilst an officer was seen attempting to loosen, it was specified that they were unable to be loosened any further. The Panel considered, could the handcuffs not have been applied to the subject's front for comfort; especially as they were compliant.
- When asked for the receipt of the search, the responding officer was heard by the Panel to say that it was available "after" 3 months and not "up to" 3 months.
- The Panel found that there were too many inconsistencies with the written form and the BWV. Within the form, it states under "*sex of officers present*" as male; however, it was clear that there were female officers present also. The Panel considered that there may have been conflicting and minimal feedback recorded for this form with the BWV, as this was a search of the premises where the record is the search of the individual.

Record 6 – (Youth)

A juvenile had a "rolling tray" on their possession which led to officers conducting a section 23 Misuse of Drugs Act.

Positives

- Officers were considered courteous throughout and clearly identified themselves.

Areas for improvement

- The subject within the form was listed as 18, which meant that he is not considered a juvenile.
- The BWV was edited in a manner that did not allow the Panel to understand how the officers became aware of how they encountered the subject in possession of a rolling tray, which was perceived to have come from their coat pocket. This meant that the Panel did not believe that the grounds specified for the search were proportionate, as due to the subject having possession of the rolling tray, the officers proceeded with their questioning regarding the use of cannabis.
- No information was captured regarding obtaining documentation of the search provided to the subject.

Queries raised

- The Panel were uncertain how a Supervisor reviewing documents and BWV that they saw, stated that this was a pass.

Record 7 – (Adult)

Whilst officers were patrolling in their vehicle late in the evening, they witnessed a male smoking in the doorway of a closed store. The officers smelt cannabis and conducted a section 23 of the Misuse of Drugs Act.

Positives

- The procedure of GOWISELY was followed by the officers and the rationale provided to the subject was clear.
- Adult Community Resolution was considered proportionate.

Areas for improvement

- Not clear how officers, at the speed they were travelling and in wet conditions, were able to smell cannabis within their vehicle passing the individual.
- When the officers established the subject's ethnicity was Chinese but born in the UK, their follow up question was asking what their right was to remain in the UK. The Panel felt this was inappropriate and discriminatory.
- Officer was heard on the BWV requesting a van before engaging with the subject. It was not clear why this was considered necessary, especially as the subject was compliant and quietly spoken throughout.
- Leading officer's demeanour and attitude towards the subject was considered abrupt.
- Officers did not ascertain why the individual was standing in the doorway of a store in the late hours on their own smoking cannabis.
- The Panel had concerns that the Supervisor has also reviewed this and has passed this.

Queries raised

- Do officers have powers to utilise their powers of S&S on smell alone?

Record 8 – (Youth)

Three juveniles were seen walking carrying a crate of beer. On witnessing police, the youths have dropped the beer and attempted to walk away. The youths were searched under Section 1 of PACE.

Positives

- GOWISELY was followed for the initial search for the first juvenile searched.
- Officer was seen to build a rapport with the first juvenile whilst conducting the search.

Areas for improvement

- Time provided in the form is incorrect.
- The language used by the lead officer was considered to be poor and the example set by the officer to the youths was considered to be a concern; especially with this being late at night in a public place. The Panel did not feel that the officer showed any courtesy or adjusted his behaviour towards juveniles despite the first juvenile being compliant.
- The tone and language by the officer towards the youths was considered unprofessional, negative and aggressive.
- One of the juveniles was sprayed with PAVA spray whilst attempting to flee. The Panel did not consider this to be reasonable and proportionate. The Panel also witnessed officers utilise force to the juvenile at the end of the video with the juvenile face down on the ground and believed the restraining method to be excessive.
- The officer was heard justifying his Use of Force to other officers specifying that the juvenile walked up to him aggressively and was throwing punches, this was not observed by the panel; however, the Panel did note that an attempt was seen by the juvenile to dislodge a drainpipe from a property to be used as a weapon. Although the Panel felt that the officer's tone and demeanour was such that would have made the juvenile feel threatened.
- The Panel raised concerns that this was seen by a supervisor and was given a pass due to the excessive force applied, language and service provided by the officer to one specific juvenile.

Queries raised

- The acronym SHACKS was used instead of GOWISELY. Is this still appropriate, is SHACKS still relevant and should GOWISELY be used?

4. Response to Queries Raised

Observations	Force response
<p>The Panel considered that GOWISELY was followed for each of the records viewed; however, they questioned whether due regard should be provided for future Learning and Development in relation to perhaps an over-reliance for process as opposed to responding to the member of public they are talking to.</p>	<p><i>As a force we will highlight the observations around potential "robotic over-reliance" on GO WISELY as a potential barrier to rapport building and effective communication to the Learning & Development Department for consideration of a review of their training delivery in this area. There is however an absolute need for officers to be fully aware of the need to follow GO WISELY when conducting stop and searches on individuals as following GO WISWLEY forms one of the key foundations of a lawful stop and search by ensuring the individuals legal rights are upheld in relation to a stop & search. Emphasis on better general communication skills may be a better way forwards but we still need to ensure that officers follow GO WISELY and if that does result in a slight barrier to effective communication then this remains an acceptable trade off when set against the potential of not ensuring the protection of the individuals legal rights.</i></p>
<p>More consideration should be applied for children who are subjects of S&S. The Panel suggested that to improve their safeguarding that GOWISELY could be adapted for children and incorporate the inclusion of notifying the parents/legal guardians.</p>	<p><i>We will link in with Learning & Development (L&D) around how officers are trained to interact with juveniles subject to stop & search and can request that the L&D Dept review the current training scenarios used in stop and search training of new student officers and formulate "juvenile specific" scenarios so that officers can become more comfortable in this area of stop &</i></p>

	<i>search interaction. We will also review the current procedures regarding the safeguarding of juveniles subject to stop & search and consider the options for notifying parents etc and what the procedure for this would be.</i>
Do officers need to provide a warrant card if they are wearing a uniform?	<i>In relation to the production of a warrant card. If an officer is in "uniform" which is broadly defined as being readily and easily identifiable as a police officer, then there is no legal requirement for the officer to produce their warrant card to the individual for inspection. If an officer is operating in "plain clothes" then it is a legal requirement for them to produce their warrant card for inspection when conducting a stop & search.</i>
Are emails of receipt for a S&S appropriate means of disclosing to the subject, given that email address cannot be verified unlike a home address; and therefore, is this permitted under GDPR?	<i>In respect the procedures for obtaining a copy of the completed stop and search record, this is an issue which has resulted from the increasing use of technology in policing as we do not use paper stop & search forms now. As a force we are very cognisant of our responsibilities around the handling and protection of personal data and as a result of this our force stop & search lead has recently rolled out a new procedure where persons subject to a stop & search are given a "physical" card with a QR code which takes the individual to the relevant section of the force website where they can liaise with the force contact centre and arrange for a copy of their stop search record to be provided accordingly. There also remains the option for the individual to attend at a local police station in person within 3 months of the date</i>

	<i>of the Stop & Search where, having satisfied the Public Enquiry Officer of their identity they can then be provided with a physical copy of the stop & search record.</i>
Is there a procedure for when subjects should be cuffed to the rear?	<i>In relation to handcuffing a subject to the rear, there is no specific guidance regarding when a subject should be handcuffed to the rear as this would be over prescriptive given the massive range of situations and circumstances that are faced daily by police officers. Any use of handcuffs MUST be justified on each separate occasion by the officer utilising them and should have a corresponding use of force record created. All operational officers are required to completed college of policing approved handcuffing training as part of their initial officer safety training as student officers. All operational officers are also required to complete 2 days of officer safety refresher training every 12 months which also includes refresher training in the application of handcuffs along with the justification for their use.</i>
The Panel noted that two officers communicated with the subject simultaneously in record 2, which they found confusing and wondered whether this was standard protocol?	<i>The principal of "contact & cover" is taught to all officers and covers this circumstance. Where possible only 1 officer (contact) should be interacting with a subject at any one time while the second (or more) officer(s) (cover) are there to provide support if required and to maintain situational awareness while the contact officer engages with the subject. In a potentially stressful situation, we recognise that multiple voices may confuse matters and this method of interaction should be used by all our officers wherever</i>

	<p><i>possible. There is nothing to prevent the contact & cover officers from changing roles if needed but the basic principle is one voice at a time. We will provide feedback to the Learning & Development Dept around ensuring that this is re-enforced with officers both in initial training and in annual refresher training.</i></p>
<p>Within record 3, the Panel were unanimous in believing that the grounds specified in the forms, and from what they witnessed in the BWV, were not considered proportionate for a S&S. The Panel suspected that the individual was deemed suspicious due to potentially officers being aware of them being a drug user previously. When justifying the grounds, the officer specified that it was due to them behaving suspiciously.</p> <p>The Panel queried whether suspicion, based on the officer's perception of an individual moving away from them intentionally, are sufficient grounds to conduct a search?</p>	<p><i>Suspicion is subjective and given the range of situations an officer will deal with, it will never be possible to specifically define what is suspicious and what is not with sufficient clarity to cover every situation. Officers receive training around in this aspect of policing and gain operational experience as they progress through their career. It is also recognised that one officer or individual may see or pick up on body language that increases their suspicion while another officer or individual may not. The base line is that it is down to the officer to explain as part of the recorded grounds, why they felt that certain behaviour etc was suspicious and this should be recorded in sufficient detail to be clear to a "reasonable person". Officers must personally justify why they have used a particular policing power.</i></p>
<p>Within record 4, a Panel member queried could the youths that were searched, could not have been asked to show their pockets instead of proceeding with a lengthy person search?</p> <p>Also, it was not clear whether the form was referencing one of the three youths or for all of them.</p>	<p><i>Officers need to be very aware of the potential for a seemingly innocuous situation to escalate rapidly at any moment. When an officer feels that they have sufficient grounds to conduct a stop and search of an individual they are expected to conduct a dynamic operational risk assessment making use of the National Decision-Making Model. In</i></p>

Additionally, officers found a 'Grinder' within the BWV; however, within the form submitted, it states that nothing was found, can this be clarified?

most circumstances there is an element of un-known risk involved in dealing with the subject of a stop & search and best practice therefore is that subjects are asked NOT to remove items from their own pockets. If the subject was in possession of a concealed weapon such as a small knife or blade then the officer, in allowing them to access their pocket potentially places themselves at serious risk of harm. Likewise, if the subject was in possession of controlled drugs then allowing the subject to place their hand into their pocket offers the opportunity for them to physically take hold of the drugs. Facing the high likelihood of it being located they may then panic and make a poor decision such as attempting to ingest the drug as a means of disposing of it. This presents a very real health risk to the subject and the officers have a duty of care to the individual. As a result, officers are taught to search and remove the contents of a subject's pockets themselves and ideally not to allow the individual un-restricted access to their pockets until the officer is satisfied that there is no apparent risk.

In respect of how the forms were recorded. Where more than one person is searched in a group of individuals and the grounds for searching each person (which must be present in each case) are essentially the same, the grounds may be replicated on each form. A form IS required to be completed for each individual person searched.

The panel references officers locating a "grinder" but noted on the form that nothing was found. A "Grinder" is not a prohibited article and if it did not contain a controlled

	<p><i>substance such as cannabis then it is legal to have in your possession. The section relating to "items found" on the form relates to items being located that are the object of the search such drugs, prohibited weapon, stolen goods etc.</i></p>
<p>For record 5, within the form it states that no force was used; however, the subject was handcuffed to the rear. The subject was seen looking uncomfortable with the tightness of the handcuffs; and whilst an officer was seen attempting to loosen, it was specified that they were unable to be loosen any further. The Panel considered whether the handcuffs could not have been applied to the subject's front for comfort; especially as they appeared compliant?</p> <p>The Panel also found that there were too many inconsistencies with the written form and the BWV. Within the form, it states under "sex of officers present" as male; however, it was clear that there were female officers present.</p>	<p><i>In respect of the subject being handcuffed to the rear as opposed to the front, as mentioned above this is a decision of the officer at the time and they must be able to fully justify the use of handcuffing and handcuffing to the rear.</i></p> <p><i>In respect of some inconsistencies in the record, it is the responsibility of each officer to complete the form accurately and of the officer's supervisor to review each completed form. We will feedback to the relevant persons the concerns regarding the inconsistencies.</i></p>
<p>It was not clear how the officers obtained the grounds to conduct the search on the subject within record 6. The way the video was edited it did not show how the officers became aware of the subject having possession of a rolling tray and why this would prompt officers to conduct a search. This raised queries over the supervisor's comments for this record.</p> <p>The Panel also raised concerns within records 7 & 8 which were also passed by a supervisor. Panel members expressed concerns over the unprofessional behaviour of the</p>	<p><i>At present the review of records takes the form of a template on the NICHE RMS records management system. We will review this to determine if this is the most effective method of record supervision. Stop search records are subject to further oversight in terms of dip sampling by divisional inspectors. We will raise this point for discussion at the next Ethical Use of Police Powers Board meeting for further consideration.</i></p>

officers subject to the BWV. Does more scrutiny need to be established with the supervisors overseeing these custody records?	
The acronym SHACKS was used instead of GOWISELY in record 8. Is this still appropriate, is SHACKS still relevant and should GOWISELY be used primarily?	<i>The mnemonic SHACKS is taught to officers as a method of effectively record the grounds for a stop & search and should not replace GO WISELY which if followed correctly ensures that the subjects legal rights around the use of stop and search powers are upheld. We will be adding an entry into the forces "Knowledge Vault" around this to ensure that officers are reminded of the difference between these two mnemonics.</i>
For record 7, the Panel felt that the officer was inappropriate and discriminatory towards the subject in his line of questioning and authoritative demeanour despite the subject seeming quiet and compliant. He was abrupt and his rationale for conducting the S&S was questionable? (Not clear how officers, at the speed they were travelling, were able to smell cannabis within their vehicle passing the individual).	<i>Our officers are expected to be respectful and courteous to persons during stop & search encounters and to always act professionally. We fully take on board the views of the panel in relation to this incident and will make further enquiries around the matter. Where it is found that an officer's standard of behaviour has fallen below the high standard expected of them, we will take appropriate action.</i>
For record 8, the Panel had concerns for the manner this officer conducted himself towards juveniles. Whilst it was clear the officer knew the youths, his demeanour, attitude, language, professionalism and justification for the application of Use of Force was questioned.	<i>As above in relation to record 7, we will make further enquiries in relation to this incident, taking into account the views and assessment of the panel and we will ensure that feedback where appropriate is passed to the officer and their supervisor.</i>

What is the current process and procedure of supervisory quality assurance checks of these S&S?

The current process for the quality assurance of stop & search records by supervisors is as follows:

- *Stop and search record is completed by the officer. This generates an automatic "task" on the Niche RMS system for the officer's supervisor prompting them to review the record.*
- *The record should be re-viewed by the supervisor and where necessary the BWV footage also reviewed.*
- *The supervisor then completes templates relating to the quality assurance of the stop and search record. The first of these covers various elements of the record such as grounds appropriately recorded etc. The supervisor then grades the record as GREEN (fully satisfactory) AMBER (partially satisfactory) or RED (un-satisfactory) and has the option to select from a list of further actions such as "De-brief" 1 to 1 review, Action Plan etc if they wish to. There is also the option for free text to be added if the supervisor wishes to do so.*
- *A second template can then be completed where the supervisor confirms that they have reviewed the record and that it is completed satisfactorily.*

The process by which stop and search records are reviewed by supervisors will be considered and reviewed as part of the forces Ethical

	<i>Use of Police Powers Board meetings.</i>
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5. Next Steps

The OPCC have been invited to attend Ethical Use of Police Powers (EUPP) Group, which is a meeting involving Chief Inspectors from each region of Dyfed-Powys to scrutinise performance in Use of Force and Stop & Search (S&S). The objective of this meeting is to have a holistic, effective and consistent performance management and performance for EUPP across Dyfed-Powys. It is within this forum, the findings of the QAP will be shared and progress will be monitored.

The QAP will continue to scrutinise UoF and S&S on an annual basis to assess progress in these areas.