

"Next Steps" report to City of London Police

Methodology

The "Next Steps" review process in the City of London police commenced on 19 November 2012.

This report is based on the full implementation of the "Next Steps" workbook including:

- Data analysis
- Staff briefings
- Daily management meeting
- Daily briefing meeting
- Focus group discussions with Constables and Sergeants
- Structured interviews with:
 - Intelligence unit
 - Training Unit
 - Performance lead
 - Diversity lead
 - Partnership lead
 - Neighbourhood Policing
 - BCU Commander
 - Police Committee Lead
 - Force professional standards

This report highlights a number of key findings and proposes a way forward.

Overview

"Next Steps" is a tool to increase community confidence through the legal, accountable, efficient and effective use of PACE Stop and Search. In addition the tool identifies any unjustified drivers of race disproportionality in the use of the power.

For the City of London we are able to demonstrate that:

- There is no evidence for a disproportionate use of Stop and Search
- There is strong evidence that the power is used:
 - Legitimately – in accordance with PACE
 - Accountably – the power is used to meet the needs of the local community
 - Effectively - there is a demonstrable link between its use and the tasking/briefing process
- There is evidence that the power is used efficiently with analysis showing a 24% arrest rate however this figure does not match data in the public domain which shows an arrest rate of 8%.

In comparison with other police forces the data highlights two striking anomalies:

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- There is a high use of the power of the power to search for cannabis
- There is a low complaint rate for Stop and Search but a relatively high complaint rate for Stop and Account

City of London Police demonstrate good practice in the use of Stop and Search that other forces will benefit from. This is driven by a shared understanding about the effectiveness and limitations of the power from the ACPO lead through the intelligence unit and on to operational officers.

Disproportionality

Accepted methods of assessing race disproportionality in the use of Stop and Search used in the Ministry of Justice Section 95 reports cannot be used in the City of London because the resident population account for only 2% of those Stopped and Searched. Indeed 65% of those Stopped and Searched are not residents in the UK. It is, therefore, not possible to establish a baseline resident population figure to calculate disproportionality.

In an attempt to identify race disproportionality in the use of the power City of London police have commissioned three research projects (2004, 2006 and 2009). These reports have used the Available Street Population (ASP) to establish a population baseline.

These reports have identified marginal (less than 2:1) disproportionality against Black suspects. The reports show a remarkable level of consistency over time in the targeting of Stop and Search against BME suspects. The reports demonstrate that the powers are targeted at crime hot spot areas at crime hot spot times. The reports are academically robust and demonstrate that there is no evidence of unjustified disproportionality in the use of Stop and Search.

We would strongly recommend that the City of London police do not pursue further work in this area. Research of this nature is costly and there is strong evidence that the use of the power is not discriminatory nor does it use stereotypes to determine those stopped and searched.

We understand that City of London are seeking to compare their levels of use of Stop and Search with Westminster borough (another area targeted by foreign national offenders). The percentage of Black and Asian suspects stopped and searched in Westminster is significantly higher for Black suspects than those for the City of London.

There is no statistically significant disproportionality in arrest rates for 2011/12 arising from Stops and Searches.

Given the strong body of evidence to demonstrate that there is no institutional racism in the deployment of the power future work should ensure that individual officers are not using the power inappropriately.

Given the effectiveness of supervision we are confident that no officers are using the power inappropriately.

Reasonable Suspicion

Operational officers and supervisors were able to articulate the concept of "reasonable suspicion" in relation to Stop and Search. Uniquely in the work of the "Next Steps" team there was a broad consensus about where the line for reasonable suspicion lies.

Officers in the Crime Squad have developed a sophisticated methodology to identify "reasonable suspicion" in relation to specific offences – from their examination of CCTV footage they have identified specific behaviours to help identify offenders. This work should be disseminated outside the force.

Confidence and compliance

Officers are confident about their use of Stop and Search. They are clear about when it should be used and we are confident that all Stops and Searches are recorded and none are invented.

The power is used frequently by officers - above the national average.

There is evidence to show Officers and Sergeants regularly discuss issues around reasonable suspicion.

There are no quantitative targets around the use of Stop and Search (neither official nor informal). Officers are encouraged and empowered but not compelled to use the power. It is widely regarded as a valuable tool.

Officers and Sergeants clearly believe they will be supported by senior managers if they use the powers appropriately.

It is notable that the loss of Section 44 has not had a dramatic impact on officer confidence.

The force does use Section 60 however the power is used infrequently, appropriately and officers are clearly briefed when it is deployed.

Training

The initial training programme on the use of Stop and Search is of high quality.

The standard NPJA package has been adapted by City of London police to ensure that:

- Officers are aware of but not intimidated by the controversies surrounding the use of the power (SUS/Scarman/MacPherson etc.)
- The training package has been adapted to ensure it is relevant to the City of London – for example there is an input on the searching of rough sleepers
- The training programme focuses on reasonable suspicion
- The training programme includes effective role play
- Training encourages a proactive use of the power

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Critically this initial training programme is backed up by an effective and robust tutor constable phase.

The force has a culture of sharing knowledge.

Arrest rate

The published arrest rate for the use of Stop and Search in the City of London is very low at 6%. Work completed by the Performance Information Unit indicates that the true figure is around 24%.

Recent changes to PACE state:

“If a search in the exercise of any power to which this Code applies results in a person being arrested and taken to a police station, the officer carrying out the search is responsible for ensuring that a record of the search is made as part of their custody record. The custody officer must then ensure that the person is asked if they want a copy of the record and if they do, that they are given a copy as soon as practicable”.

There is evidence to suggest that this process has not been fully adopted by the City of London police. Some officers continue to use Stop and Search forms while others use the custody record. This confusion is leading to a failure to accurately record arrest rates.

The issue is a relatively easy one to resolve – it requires the force to adopt a single system to ensure that the custody record notes whether or not the arrest was a result of a search.

Tasking/briefing process

The tasking process we saw was effective and focused. It clearly identified priorities for the force in a detailed and pragmatic fashion. This, in turn, was supported by a limited number of highly focused briefing slides that gave officers clear direction and help them develop the grounds for effective Stops and Searches.

Officers were attentive during the briefing process; they were able to recall the key points after the briefing and all those interviewed felt the briefings made a positive contribution to their work.

Briefings are supplemented by a tasking sheet which deployed officers to specific locations to complete specific tasks. A simple but effective system that has the support of officers.

We understand that the tasking/briefing process has recently been modified and that there are plans for future refinement. Work to date is impressive.

Supervision

Supervisors were clear in their responsibilities towards checking Stop and Search forms. In addition to checking the forms for completeness and accuracy they were confident in discussing how to help officers to use the tactic effectively.

The Sharepoint system ensures that officers are deployed in accordance with the tasking/briefing process.

Focus on cannabis

City of London police do have a focus on cannabis use in their use of Stop and Search. In other forces this can have a negative impact on community confidence – where residents feel that cannabis possession is being pursued at the expense of more serious offences.

Searches for cannabis possession are less likely to result in an arrest (around 8%) compared to other PACE searches (around 28%).

This focus on cannabis is a result of the City of London police's concentration on vehicle searches. These vehicle searches prompted by ANPR notifications or as a result of a counter terrorism operation often result in a search for cannabis possession (officers smell cannabis in the vehicle).

This is an appropriate and effective use of the power. Officers cannot ignore the fact that a driver could be in possession of cannabis and the deployment of the powers in such a fashion is supported by local communities.

Community support/involvement

Community support for the use of Stop and Search is strong. It is notable that the local IAG – which is robustly challenging the force over its plans for restructuring – does not have any specific issues around the use of stop and search.

There are few complaints from the use of Stop and Search although uniquely a number of complaints (10 last year) around the use of Stop and Account. These complaints concern the gathering of information to complete Operation Lightning forms. Again this is both legitimate and in line with the needs of the local community.

Through Operation Griffin the local community have the ability to directly influence the use of Stop and Search. Those targeted through Operation Griffin have been trained so they are aware of the limitations to the use of the power.

The new Stop and Search community monitoring group is an excellent innovation. To ensure that it is effective and energised we recommend that it focuses its work on the use of the power by individual officers – through dip sampling forms - rather than trying to scrutinise data.

Appendix A

Mobile data

The current Stop and Search form is long, complex and difficult to complete. It is a credit to the morale of the force that we had so few complaints about the form. There are now a number of mobile data solutions available to the City Of London police and we would strongly recommend that the force looks at the GMP solution which uses Airwave radios to record encounters.

Recommendations

1. Community monitoring group to dip sample Stop and Search records to ensure appropriate grounds
2. Force to seek a mobile data solution to record Stop and Search
3. Force to actively seek opportunities to proactively promote its use of Stop and Search to the Police Committee, the wider community and the media.
4. Ensure the custody suite captures data on those arrests that resulted from a Stop and Search