PEEL: Police legitimacy 2015

An inspection of Northamptonshire Police

Contents

Overview – How legitimate is the force at keeping people safe and reducing crime?

Overall judgment[1]

🟠🟠🟠⚪ **Good**

Throughout 2015, HMIC's PEEL legitimacy inspection programme has assessed the culture within Northamptonshire Police, and how this is reflected in the force's public engagement, use of Taser and compliance with the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme.

The chief officer team took seriously the need for an ethical and inclusive workforce, and allegations against officers and staff were generally dealt with fairly and consistently. It is clear that local teams engage positively with the public, but this approach lacks consistency.

The force is complying with most of the features of the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme, and use of Taser is fair and appropriate.

This is the first time HMIC has graded forces on their legitimacy, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

Summary

Individuals at all levels in Northamptonshire Police consistently demonstrated that they sought to develop and maintain an ethical culture and that the Code of Ethics had been made part of the force's training and development opportunities wherever possible. However, many staff held a perception that promotion processes lacked transparency and, in some cases, were seen as unfair. The force demonstrated a proportionate, fair and consistent response to complaints and misconduct.

When HMIC looked at how well the force understands and successfully engages with all the people it serves, we found there is a good understanding of the need to build trust and confidence in the communities it serves. There are some very clearly documented assessments of local communities and their policing needs, although this is not yet a consistent feature throughout the organisation. Local teams do not have sufficient information available to them to improve their understanding of local communities.

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[1] Outstanding, Good, Requires improvement or Inadequate – see Annex A.

There is an effective system in place to identify and manage community tensions as they emerge through the use of community tension assessments.

Stop and search and Taser are two ways that the police can prevent crime and protect the public. However, they can be intrusive and forceful methods, and it is therefore vital the police use them fairly and appropriately. HMIC found that Northamptonshire Police shows a commitment to implement the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme. Many of the aspects of the scheme are already being applied, and officers are now significantly better at recording the grounds leading to any stop and search. Taser is used fairly and appropriately by the force.

To what extent does practice and behaviour reinforce the wellbeing of staff and an ethical culture?

Good

Individuals at all levels in Northamptonshire Police consistently demonstrated ethical behaviour. The Code of Ethics was a well-established part of the force's training and development opportunities. Where training had been provided, the code was well understood by most of the workforce, and was used to inform day-to-day decision-making, although not all officers and staff had received training to ensure a consistent understanding.

Most of the workforce felt valued and engaged in decisions which affected them and were generally comfortable in challenging decisions where appropriate. However, we found that many staff held a perception that

How well does the force understand, engage with and treat fairly the people it serves to maintain and improve its legitimacy?

Good

Northamptonshire Police officers and staff have a good understanding of the need to build trust and confidence in the communities they serve. Some assessments of local communities and their policing needs are very clearly documented but there is not yet a consistent picture throughout the force. Local teams should have sufficient information available to them to improve their understanding of local communities.

The force has an effective way to identify and manage community tensions as they emerge through the use of Community Tension Assessments.

Social media is used by some officers to engage

To what extent are decisions taken on the use of stop and search and Taser fair and appropriate?

Good

Northamptonshire Police is implementing the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme and most of the aspects of the scheme are already in place. Officers are now significantly better at recording the grounds leading to any stop and search.

Taser is being used fairly and appropriately by Northamptonshire Police. Taser devices are only issued by the force to specialist officers within the East Midlands Operational Support Services (EMOpSS), which includes officers from three other neighbouring forces.

Officers are well trained and understand their responsibility to consider all tactical options when deploying Taser.

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promotion procedures lacked transparency and, in some cases, were seen as unfair.

The force demonstrated a proportionate, fair and consistent response to complaints and misconduct. In the case files we reviewed, we found that swift and robust action was taken when necessary and no bias or unfairness was identified between staff and officer cases, although adherence to national guidance and better use of local resolutions would provide a more consistent approach.

with communities and the force actively uses its website to feature positive news stories. Volunteers actively engage in a wide range of policing activities and this is positive.

Training on the National Decision Model is provided to all staff alongside the Code of Ethics, and most officers demonstrate a clear understanding of how to apply the model in their daily decision-making. This training is provided through a variety of different training methods. The chief constable repeatedly reinforces messages to staff about treating people fairly and properly.

Force in numbers

Ethnic diversity

Percentage of BAME in workforce 31 March 2015

overall workforce

4%

officers	staff	PCSOs
4%	**4%**	**5%**

Percentage of BAME in local population, 2011 Census

9%

Gender diversity

Percentage of females in overall workforce 31 March 2015

Northamptonshire Police	England and Wales force average
44%	**41%**

Percentage of females by role, Northamptonshire Police

officers	staff	PCSOs
30%	**66%**	**40%**

Percentage of females by role, England and Wales force average

officers	staff	PCSOs
29%	**60%**	**47%**

Public complaints

Number of allegations made by the public that have been finalised 12 months to 31 March 2015

Northamptonshire Police

924

Proportion of finalised allegations investigated 12 months to 31 March 2015

Northamptonshire Police	Force's most similar group average
70%	**51%**

Proportion of finalised allegations upheld after investigation 12 months to 31 March 2015

Northamptonshire Police	Force's most similar group average
16%	19%

Stop and search

Number of stops and searches carried out 12 months to 31 March 2015

4,579

Stops and searches per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2015

Northamptonshire Police	Force's most similar group average
6.4	5.6

Change in number of stops and searches 12 months to 31 March 2014 to 12 months to 31 March 2015

Northamptonshire Police	Force's most similar group average
-47%	-25%

Tasers

Number of times a Taser was used 12 months to 31 December 2014

94

Number of times a Taser was used per 10,000 population 12 months to 31 December 2014

Northamptonshire Police	Force's most similar group average
1.3	1.5

Taser 'discharged' (as proportion of overall use) 12 months to 31 December 2014

Northamptonshire Police	Force's most similar group average
15%*	19%

Data: for further information about the data used in this graphic see annexes B and D in this report and annex B in the national legitimacy report.

* These data are based on small numbers and so comparisons with the average should be treated with caution.

Introduction

Throughout 2015, HMIC has assessed the extent to which police forces are legitimate in how they keep people safe and reduce crime. This is one strand of the PEEL (Police Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Legitimacy) all-force inspection programme.

A police force is considered to be legitimate if it has the consent of the public, and if those working in the force consistently behave in a way that is fair, reasonable, effective and lawful. The force must also generate the trust and co-operation of the public.

To reach a judgment on each force's legitimacy, HMIC examined three areas:

Spring 2015 inspection

- To what extent does practice and behaviour reinforce the wellbeing of staff and an ethical culture?

Autumn 2015 inspection

- How well does the force understand, engage with and treat fairly the people it serves to maintain and improve its legitimacy

- To what extent are decisions taken on the use of stop and search and Taser fair and appropriate?

This report provides the main findings for Northamptonshire Police.

Methodology

During our inspection we interviewed relevant senior leaders, collected data and documentation from forces, surveyed the public to seek their views of the force, held focus groups for those at different grades and ranks, and undertook unannounced visits to individual police stations to gather evidence and speak with officers and staff.

Prior to inspection fieldwork we also reviewed a small number of Taser deployment forms, stop and search forms, and listened to calls for service from members of the public.

This work was informed by research on the two principal characteristics of a legitimate organisation – organisational justice and procedural justice.

Organisational justice[2]

Every day, people respond to the actions and decisions made by their organisation that affect them or their work. Research shows that an individual's perceptions of these decisions (and the processes that led to them) as fair or unfair can influence their subsequent attitudes and behaviours.

In a policing context, staff who feel they are treated fairly and with respect by their force are more likely to go on to treat the public with whom they come into contact fairly and with respect. This will increase the public's view that the police act legitimately.

Procedural justice

Research[3] has shown that for the police to be considered legitimate in the eyes of the public, people need to believe that the police will treat them with respect, make fair decisions (and take the time to explain these decisions), and be friendly and approachable. It also indicates that the way officers behave is central to policing as it can encourage greater respect for the law and foster social responsibility.

There is also an economic benefit for a force which is seen as legitimate by the communities it serves. The more the public provides support to the police through information or intelligence, or become more active in policing activities (such as Neighbourhood Watch or other voluntary activity), the less the financial burden on police forces.

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[2] *It's a fair cop? Police legitimacy, public cooperation, and crime reduction*, Andy Myhill and Paul Quinton, National Policing Improvement Agency, London, 2011. Available from: www.college.police.uk

[3] *ibid*

To what extent does practice and behaviour reinforce the wellbeing of staff and an ethical culture?

Introduction

As organisational justice has a direct relationship to procedural justice (we treat others as we are treated), it is critical that the culture inside police forces is an ethical one, where challenge and continual improvement are encouraged. It is also crucial that all officers and staff feel that they and others are treated fairly and consistently (for example, when an allegation is made against them by a member of the public or a colleague). Even if a system or process is fair, if people do not believe that it is, then organisational justice will not have been achieved.

Officers and staff who feel they are treated fairly and with respect by their force, are more likely to go on to treat the public with whom they come into contact fairly and with respect. This will increase the public's view that the police act legitimately.

In spring 2015,[4] HMIC made an assessment of police force culture. The inspection asked:

1. How well does the force develop and maintain an ethical culture?

2. How well does the force provide for the wellbeing of staff?

3. How well has the Code of Ethics been used to inform policy and practice?

4. How fairly and consistently does the force deal with complaints and misconduct?

In addition, HMIC also considered the number of females and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people at different ranks and grades, to determine the extent to which the diversity of the force reflects that of the communities it serves.

Gender and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) breakdown in Northamptonshire Police

A breakdown of the full-time equivalent (FTE) workforce[5] in Northamptonshire Police as at 31 March 2015 is shown below.

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[4] The inspection took place between March and June 2015.

[5] Workforce comprises officers, staff and police community support officers (PCSOs).

Figure 1: Breakdown of full-time equivalent (FTE) workforce in Northamptonshire Police, 31 March 2015

FTE	Total	Of which			
		Female		BAME*	
Total workforce	**2,198**	**974**	**(44%)**	**78**	**(4%)**
Total officers	**1,229**	**370**	**(30%)**	**44**	**(4%)**
Constables	922	306	(33%)	34	(4%)
Sergeants	218	44	(20%)	8	(4%)
Inspecting ranks	76	18	(23%)**	2	(3%)**
Superintendents and above	14	1	**	0	**
Staff	**846**	**556**	**(66%)**	**28**	**(4%)**
PCSOs	**122**	**48**	**(40%)**	**6**	**(5%)**

Note that numbers may not add up to totals because of rounding.

* Individuals are not required to record their ethnicity. As a result, BAME totals and percentages exclude officers/staff/PCSOs where the ethnicity is not stated.

** Due to the figures being small, percentages should be treated with caution. In particular, percentages have not been included where totals are very small.

Source: Home Office Police Workforce statistics

The figure below shows how the percentages of female officers, staff and PCSOs in Northamptonshire Police compared with the averages of all forces in England and Wales. It shows they were broadly similar for officers, higher for staff yet lower for PCSOs.

Figure 2: The percentage of female officers, staff and PCSOs in Northamptonshire Police compared with the force average for England and Wales, 31 March 2015
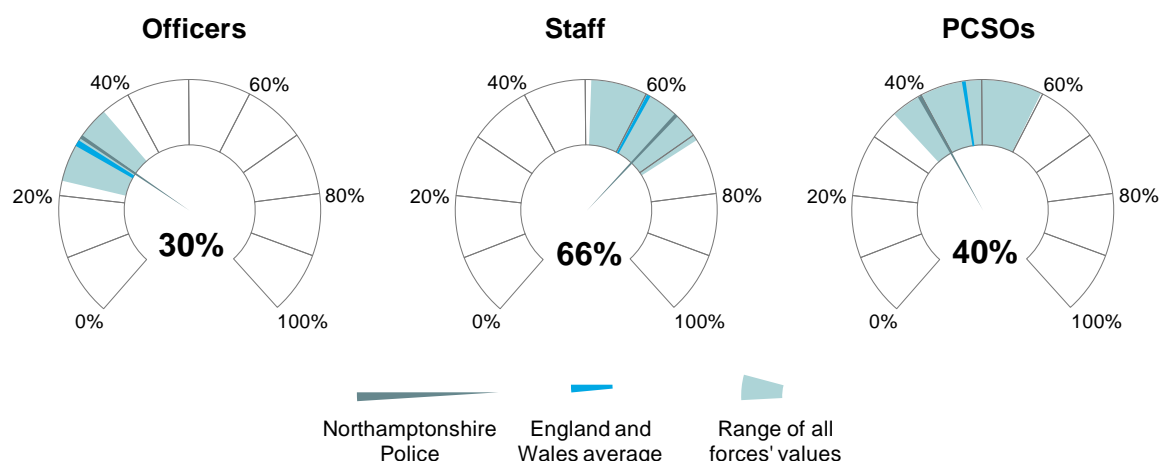
Source: Home Office Police Workforce statistics

We compared the percentages of (i) BAME officers, (ii) BAME police staff and (iii) BAME PCSOs in each force with the proportion of BAME people living in the force's area. In Northamptonshire, around 9 percent of the local population were BAME. The figure below shows these comparisons.

There was a statistically significant under-representation of BAME people in Northamptonshire Police's overall police workforce, as well as separately for officers and staff.
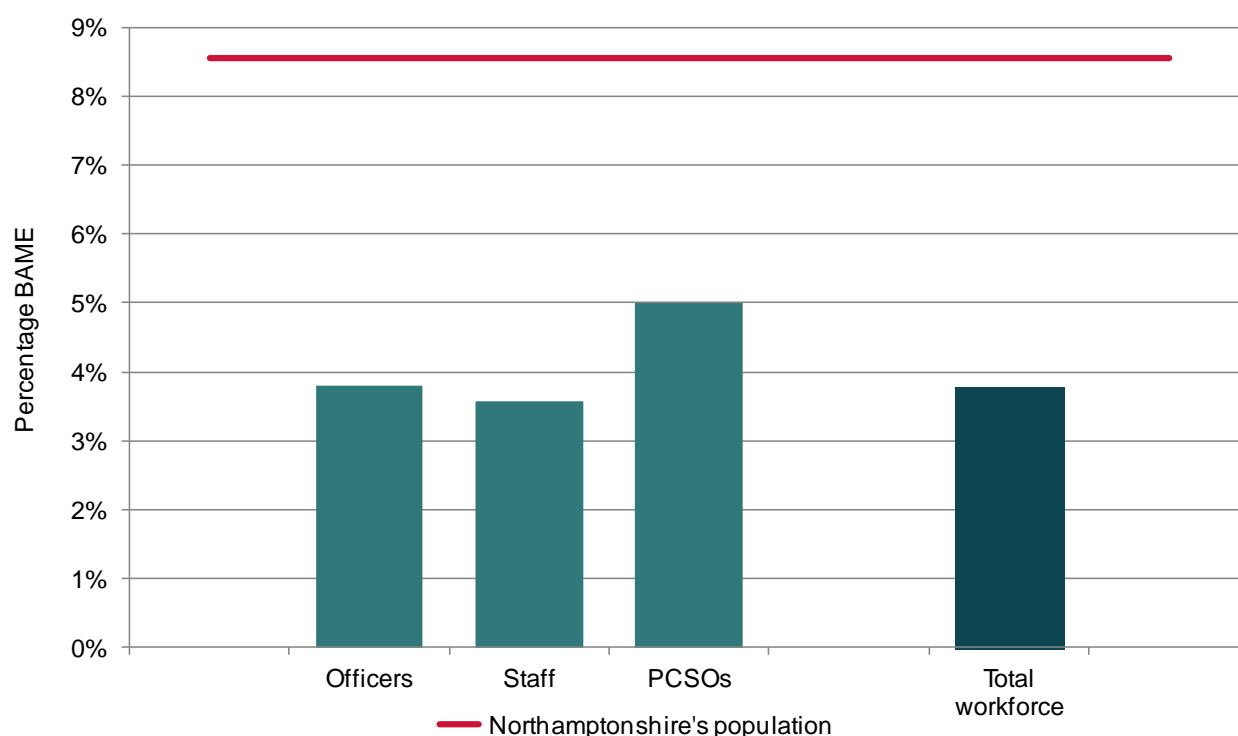
Figure 3: Percentage of BAME people within Northamptonshire Police's workforce (as at 31 March 2015) compared with its local population

Sources: Home Office Police Workforce statistics and Office for National Statistics 2011 Census

Police forces in England and Wales have experienced large reductions in their total workforce since the government's October 2010 spending review.[6] HMIC also examined how the percentages of BAME officers and staff, and females within the workforce had changed over this period.

Across all police forces in England and Wales, total workforce numbers decreased by 15 percent between 31 March 2010 and 31 March 2015. However, the percentages of BAME people and females within the overall workforce increased during the five-year period. Most notably, the proportion of female officers increased over 2 percentage points to 28 percent, and the proportion of BAME officers increased by nearly 1 percentage point to just under 6 percent. In contrast, the proportion of BAME PCSOs decreased by nearly 2 percentage points to just over 9 percent.

[6]Spending Review 2010, HM Government, October 2013. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2010

The figure below shows how these volumes and proportions have changed in Northamptonshire Police over the spending review period.

Figure 4: Change in Northamptonshire Police's workforce (overall volume and the percentage of female and BAME people), 31 March 2010 to 31 March 2015

	Total change		Percentage point change	
			% female	% BAME
Total workforce	**-481**	**(-18%)**	**-1**	**0**
Officers	-113	(-8%)	+3 ●	0
Staff	-326	(-28%)	0	-1
PCSOs	-42	(-25%)	-1	-1

Note that numbers may not add up to totals because of rounding.

● Denotes there has been a statistically significant change in the proportion (see Annex B for details).

Source: Home Office Police Workforce statistics

There were no statistically significant changes in the percentages of either females or BAME people within Northamptonshire Police's overall workforce between 31 March 2010 and 31 March 2015. However, there was a statistically significant change in the percentage of female officers – around a 3 percentage point increase.

Overall, compared with other forces, as at 31 March 2015, the percentage of females within Northamptonshire Police's workforce was broadly similar for officers, higher for staff yet lower for PCSOs. By ethnicity, there was an under-representation in BAME officers and staff and there was no statistically significant change in the proportions between 31 March 2010 and 31 March 2015 for either group.

How well does the force develop and maintain an ethical culture?

It is critical that the culture inside police forces is an ethical one, where challenge and continual improvement are encouraged and where staff feel that they and others are treated fairly and consistently. If it is not, the service provided to the public may be equally unfair and inconsistent. HMIC therefore considered the extent to which people at all levels and all ranks (or equivalent) were creating and maintaining an ethical culture.

The force was working hard to develop an ethical culture and there were clear messages from the chief constable and the chief officer team setting out the vision and values of the force. These were being made part of day-to-day practice in the force through a number of channels which enabled face-face contact between staff and the chief officer team. These included chief officer roadshows and leadership

seminars chaired by members of the chief officer team. Staff not only understood these messages, but also supported them. At all levels, individuals consistently demonstrated that they were seeking to develop and maintain an ethical culture.

However, many staff held a perception that promotion processes lacked transparency and, in some cases, perceived them to be unfair. A majority of those people spoken to described attitudes which amounted to 'favouritism' in some appointments. The force was working to address these perceptions by adopting demonstrably fair and transparent procedures, such as including independent persons within various stages of key promotion processes as well as wider development work.

An annual 'Speak now' survey has helped the force understand staff views and perceptions.

Staff were comfortable challenging the behaviours and decisions of others when appropriate and told us that challenge within the force was normal. There was a 'bad apple' confidential reporting mechanism for misconduct issues and staff members were aware of it and felt confident they would use it. However, others described situations where they did not challenge for fear of an adverse impact on their careers and a number of staff members indicated they were less willing to challenge chief inspectors and superintendents.

The force recognised that some departments had disproportionally fewer black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and female officers and had sought to introduce mentoring and placements to improve this situation. The force had also used its special constable intakes to increase the level of BAME and female staff. However, it acknowledged that more needed to be done to improve the representation of these groups among the workforce.

How well does the force provide for the wellbeing of staff?

Police forces need to understand the benefits of having a healthier workforce – a happy and healthy workforce is likely to be a more productive one, as a result of people taking fewer sick days and having a greater investment in what they do. This inspection was concerned with what efforts were being made in forces to consider, and provide for, the wellbeing needs of their workforce.

The force was making efforts to understand the wellbeing of its workforce and provide support. However, a number of officers and staff felt more needed to be done to more to provide for the wellbeing of staff and raised concerns about how they and their colleagues had been treated and the lack of effective services available to help and support them. Staff felt that the force needed to do more to provide for the wellbeing of the workforce.

There was a panel to support managers dealing with wellbeing issues, which included representatives from human resources, occupational health and staff unions. The 'Speak now' survey of staff, conducted in 2014, to understand whether the workforce felt valued and empowered was followed up with a 'You said, we did' approach to update the workforce further. The action taken to respond to staff concerns was provided, for example, the improvement to the performance appraisal process, and setting up a women officers' group as a result of these staff feeling de-motivated and unvalued.

Staff described an inconsistent response to wellbeing support, with some supervisors and managers being supportive and others not, which was perceived as being made worse by a rapid turnover of managers and supervisors in frontline and neighbourhood roles. Although staff felt that there was some provision for their wellbeing, they were disappointed that information was only available on the intranet and many were therefore unaware of the full range of wellbeing services available. Generally, officers and staff were aware that occupational health and wellbeing support was available through the new multi force shared system (MFSS), a back-office shared service system provided by a collaboration between Cheshire Constabulary, [Northamptonshire Police](#) and [Nottinghamshire Police](#) which provides payroll, accounting, purchasing and human resources on a self-service basis. However, staff highlighted concerns that the new system was not easy to use and involved lengthy timescales for requests to be processed, potentially causing staff to avoid seeking help and consequently undermining the value achieved by the service.

Many staff were also dissatisfied with the counselling and medical support available from the current providers. Some staff told us that they, or a colleague, had received little or no support or contact while on maternity leave or long-term sickness, and that return to work arrangements were poor. Some counselling was only available by telephone and there was a limitation on the number of times an individual could use the service. This meant that sometimes staff were not seeking help when needed.

The 'Open minds' network, a staff-led initiative, had recently been set up and was seen as a positive development in understanding and dealing with mental health issues. The force was also working to strengthen its approach to wellbeing overall. For example, at the time of inspection, the organisational development forum was focused on co-ordinating and advancing relevant work through the finalisation of a force wellbeing strategy.

How well has the Code of Ethics been used to inform policy and practice?

In April 2014, the College of Policing launched the Code of Ethics.[7] This sets out nine policing principles that should be applied by all officers and staff: Accountability; Integrity; Openness; Fairness; Leadership; Respect; Honesty; Objectivity; and Selflessness. These principles should be used to underpin the decisions and actions taken by officers and staff.

This inspection considered the extent to which officers and staff were aware of the Code of Ethics, and how the force was working to make the code part of day-to-day practice.

The Code of Ethics had been strongly promoted by the chief officer team through a range of channels, such as podcasts, emails and posters. It was well established and was well understood by most of the workforce. The code also featured strongly within the National Decision Model when used by operational staff.

Those staff who had received Code of Ethics training described it as a comprehensive approach which included a series of emails and messages about training events. The training experienced by staff was described as helpful and framed around contemporary issues like the use of social media.

The force had introduced both internal and external ethics committees which informed and updated the workforce through blogs and messages from the chief officer team. In recruitment and promotion interviews, questions were also posed to test an individual's compliance with the code.

However, the Code of Ethics was not fully integrated into all policies and practices and work was ongoing to update them as they became due for review or new polices were created.

How fairly and consistently does the force deal with complaints and misconduct?

Complaints made by the public against police officers, police staff, contracted police staff, and force procedures are recorded by individual police forces. Each complaint may have one or more allegations attached to it. For example, one complaint that an officer was rude and that they pushed an individual would be recorded as two separate allegations.

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[7] Code of Ethics: - A Code of Practice for the Principles and Standards of Professional Behaviour for the Policing Profession of England and Wales, College of Policing, London, 2014. Available from: www.college.police.uk

Each allegation can be dealt with, or resolved, in a number of ways. Some complaints, such as rudeness or incivility, may be dealt with through the local resolution process. The way these complaints are resolved should be adapted to the needs of the complainant – for example, they may involve an apology or an explanation of the circumstances in writing or in person. If the complaint is more serious, and assessed as not suitable for local resolution, it must be investigated by an appointed investigating officer who will produce a report detailing findings against each allegation. Under certain circumstances, some complaints do not proceed. These use processes known as disapplication or dispensation (for example, if the matter is already the subject of a complaint or if the complaint is repetitious or vexatious), discontinuance (for example, if the complainant refuses to co-operate or it is not reasonably practicable to investigate the complaint) or if they are withdrawn by the complainant.[8]

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, Northamptonshire Police finalised 924 allegations from public complaints that were made against its officers and staff. Of these, 70 percent had been investigated and 19 percent had been locally resolved. A greater proportion of allegations were investigated and a smaller proportion were locally resolved in Northamptonshire compared with the average of its most similar group of forces.[9]

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, the average time Northamptonshire Police took to complete a local resolution was 49 days, broadly in line with the average of its most similar group of forces (55 days). Over the same period, the average time a local investigation took to complete was 106 days, less than the average of its most similar group of forces (134 days).

After local investigation, Northamptonshire Police closed 646 allegations in the 12 months to 31 March 2015. Of these, 16 percent were upheld, where it was concluded that the service provided by the police officer or police staff or the service as a whole did not reach the standard a reasonable person could expect. This was less than the average of Northamptonshire's most similar group of forces of 19 percent. The following figure shows how these values compare.

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[8] For a more complete outline of the definitions and potential outcomes resulting from public complaints, please see the Independent Police Complaints Commission's website: www.ipcc.gov.uk.

[9] Most similar groups are groups of local areas that have been found to be most similar to each other using statistical methods, based on demographic, economic and social characteristics which relate to crime. See Annex B.

Figure 5: Proportion of allegations investigated, proportion upheld, time taken to finalise allegations by local resolutions and investigations by Northamptonshire Police, 12 months to 31 March 2015

Proportion of allegations investigated

70%

Proportion of allegations upheld

16%

Average time taken to finalise allegations - local resolution

49 days

Average time taken to finalise allegations - local investigation

106 days

Northamptonshire Police

Most similar group average

Range of all forces' values
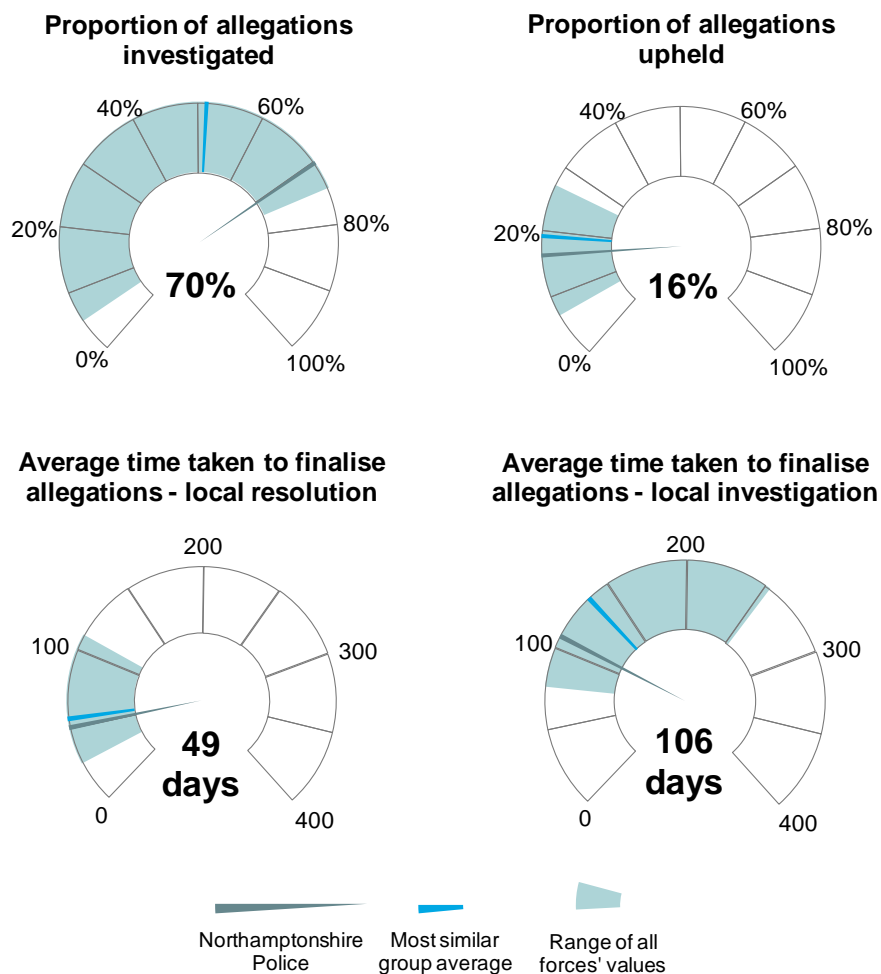
Source: Independent Police Complaints Commission

Overall, in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, Northamptonshire Police finalised 70 percent of allegations by investigation. The proportion of allegations it upheld after local investigation was less than the average of its most similar group of forces. Compared to its most similar group of forces, Northamptonshire took a similar amount of time to complete local resolutions and less time to complete local investigations.

Are officers and staff, particularly those with protected characteristics, treated fairly following a complaint or allegation against them?

While it is very important that public complaints and allegations of misconduct or corruption are taken seriously, it is also important that those subject to these allegations or complaints are treated fairly and consistently, and that there is no bias or discrimination involved in any aspect of the decision-making process.

Building on the findings of the HMIC Police Integrity and Corruption inspection,[10] this inspection considered if public complaints and misconduct investigations were dealt with in a timely and consistent manner. The inspection also considered whether investigations were conducted fairly and whether officers and staff, particularly those with protected characteristics,[11] felt that they would be treated fairly following a complaint or allegation against them.

Before the fieldwork stage began, HMIC conducted a file review of 60 public complaints and internal misconduct allegations, to assess whether they had been considered fairly and consistently. The outcomes of the review were further examined during our fieldwork.

While not necessarily representative of all cases, in the small number of files we looked at we did not find any evidence of any bias in how complaints and internal misconduct allegations were dealt with, in respect of gender, ethnicity or rank.

The professional standards department dealt with complaints and misconduct for both police officers and staff and the end result was a consistent approach to complaints and misconduct allegations.

The file review found a proportionate and fair response to complaints and misconduct allegations. Swift and robust action was taken when necessary and no unfairness was identified between staff and officer cases. However, some of the initial complaint assessments were poor and had been made by a member of staff below the rank or grade required by police regulations. Legislation governing public complaints requires that the initial assessment be carried out by an officer of not lower than chief inspector rank or police staff equivalent. However, the final supervisory assessment of the files reviewed was consistently of a high quality.

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[10] *Integrity Matters: An inspection of arrangements to ensure integrity and to provide the capability to tackle corruption in policing*, HMIC, London, 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic

[11] Under the Equality Act 2010, it is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of: age; being or becoming a transsexual person; being married or in a civil partnership; being pregnant or having a child; disability; race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; religion, belief or lack of religion/belief; sex; or sexual orientation. These are called 'protected characteristics'.

There was limited learning within the organisation from investigations and shared with the workforce. There was also very limited reference made to the Code of Ethics within those complaints and misconduct files examined.

The force did not always adhere to national guidance by making good use of local resolutions when seeking to resolve complaints. This could lead to unnecessary bureaucracy and a full investigation which was not an efficient use of resources. The force recognised this and had commenced a project to address the issue.

Encouragingly, at every level, the workforce felt that the disciplinary process was transparent, consistent and fair, and that senior leaders within the professional standards department were seen to be approachable.

Summary of findings

Good

Individuals at all levels in Northamptonshire Police consistently demonstrated ethical behaviour. The Code of Ethics was a well- established part of the force's training and development opportunities. Where training had been provided, the code was well understood by most of the workforce, and was used to inform day-to-day decision-making, although not all officers and staff had received training to ensure a consistent understanding.

Most of the workforce felt valued and engaged in decisions which affected them and were generally comfortable in challenging decisions where appropriate. However, we found that many staff held a perception that promotion procedures lacked transparency and, in some cases, were seen as unfair.

The force demonstrated a proportionate, fair and consistent response to complaints and misconduct. In the case files we reviewed, we found that swift and robust action was taken when necessary and no bias or unfairness was identified between staff and officer cases, although adherence to national guidance and better use of local resolutions would provide a more consistent approach.

How well does the force understand, engage with and treat fairly the people it serves to maintain and improve its legitimacy?

Introduction

The negative effect of poor police and community relations on public perceptions should not be underestimated. People who already have a poor opinion of the police are more likely to perceive their contact with the police as a negative experience. On the other hand, perceptions of fair decision-making and positive public interaction and engagement can improve perceptions and increase trust, leading to improved or enhanced police legitimacy. This, in turn, helps efforts to reduce crime by encouraging greater respect for the law and fostering social responsibility, by making people more likely to help the police and not break the law.

Community engagement should influence every aspect of policing. For engagement to be effective, the organisation should focus on the needs of citizens and be committed to ensuring that the results from engagement work are integrated into service design and provision, and that communities participate in that provision.

In autumn 2015, HMIC made an assessment of the extent to which police forces understand and engage with the people they are there to serve. Based on the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice on engagement and communication,[12] the inspection asked:

1. How well does the force understand the people it serves and the benefits of engaging with them?

2. How well does the force engage with all the people it serves?

3. To what extent are people treated fairly and with respect when they come into contact with police officers and staff?

Before the fieldwork stage of the inspection, HMIC commissioned Ipsos MORI to survey the public in each force area, specifically seeking their views about their force. While the findings of the survey may not represent the views of everyone living in the force area, they are indicative of what the public in that police force area think.

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[12] *College of Policing: Authorised Professional Practice on engagement and communication.* Available from www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/

How well does the force understand the people it serves and the benefits of engaging with them?

HMIC's inspection considered the extent to which forces understand the relationship between positive public engagement and increased public confidence in the police. We also assessed the extent to which, at local and force levels, the force understands the needs and concerns of the people it serves.

Northamptonshire Police has recently introduced a number of new approaches to the way it engages with local people. An example of this is the creation of an external independent ethics committee to advise on how local people view the force's approach to policing and its decision-making. This reflects the commitment by the chief officer team to ensure it is doing all it can to meet its moral and ethical responsibility in protecting the communities it serves and keeping them safe.

Working with the police and crime commissioner (PCC), the force consults with partner organisations and engages locally to build on levels of trust and confidence. Neighbourhood officers understand the need to gain the support of the public and recognise that the way they carry out their everyday duties is important for increasing public confidence in the police.

The Independent Advisory Group is vibrant with new members and the force is keen to fully understand the views of local minority groups and ethnic communities. Specialist assistance from the universities at Cardiff and Northampton is used to build up a more detailed understanding of some parts of the county. For example, an approach employing a research tool called SENSOR enables local police managers to collect information about the areas of Oundle and the All Saints area of Kettering. However, while this research project is ongoing officers in the two areas do not use the products of this research as the basis for planning local policing responses to problems identified.

Within Northampton town and a number of other areas, there are active Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), made up of partner agencies. The priority area of Kingsthorpe and St Davids has been adopted as the county's first Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) due to levels of anti-social behaviour and violence linked with underage drinking and alcohol abuse. This includes partnership working with local businesses, i.e. licensed premises (led by Waitrose) educating other licensees in respect of the effects of alcohol harm. This is supported by a range of activities, including visits and alcohol harm presentations to all schools within the priority area, as well as a community questionnaire to capture the key concerns of local residents

The CSP in Northampton employs an analyst to help assess crime and disorder issues in the town. This leads to 'Weeks of Action' focused on identified problems or areas, where the police together with many agencies work together alongside community volunteers, often going from door to door speaking to residents about their concerns and offering crime prevention advice.

There are two community engagement officers who maintain lists of important contacts and community representatives, listen to local views, and communicate local police action and priorities. Across the force, the community or ward profiles have not been kept up-to-date and rarely informed local policing action. This means the force does not have a consistent and robust corporate method for having current knowledge and information on communities readily available for frontline officers to use.

Community Tension Assessments (CTA) are produced during any major operation or large-scale crime investigation to help understand and respond to potential concerns or tensions within communities. Those examined show that they are used well, gathering all relevant information about high-profile policing events. On a daily basis, the force keeps track of any current tension indicators and supervisors check to make sure the policing response matches any concerns and risks in the area.

Of the 403 survey responses from the area covered by Northamptonshire Police, 47 percent agree that the police understand the crime and anti-social behaviour issues within their force area and 17 percent disagree. The remainder neither agree nor disagree or do not know. Although not directly comparable because of the small force sample size, of the responses from all forces across England and Wales, 49 percent agree versus 14 percent who disagree.

How well does the force engage with all the people it serves?

For the police to find the most cost effective and efficient ways of communicating with the public, they should tailor their methods of engagement in a way that meets the needs and preferences of those they serve. The police should ensure they overcome any barriers to successful engagement (for example, social exclusion, location, low confidence in the police) to seek the views of all the people they serve and keep them informed. From the survey, fewer than 10 percent of respondents report that they have, within the previous 12 months, been asked about their views on crime and anti-social behaviour issues that matter most to them where they live. Similarly, in most forces, fewer than 20 percent of respondents have been told, within the previous 12 months, how their force is tackling these issues.

Our inspection looked at the different ways that forces engage their communities.

Northamptonshire Police use a range of methods to seek the views of the public. These include a portal on the force website where the public can send in opinions and views about policing in the county. Officers also hold regular surgeries and public meetings which are advertised on the website and by posters, where local people are asked what they would like the police to prioritise. The community engagement officers attend meetings called 'Council forums' to draw on the views of

communities, as well as numerous organisations representing schools, faith groups and minority associations. The officers produce electronic newsletters to improve interaction with communities.

The force, together with the PCC, uses specific campaigns to gather the views of different communities, such as a campaign which focused on the opinions of children and their parents concerning online risks. Through this one channel alone, the force contacted around 13,000 children, young people and their parents.

While there are many examples of positive engagement with communities, these are not co-ordinated or evaluated for their overall effectiveness. Only recently has the force written a plan for community engagement, which aims to provide a way of systematically gathering the views of all its communities.

Activities of local policing teams or 'safer communities teams', are documented on the force website with many using the "You said 'We did'" style of reporting .The teams record the results they have achieved, which are also given in person to local community meetings. This allows local partner agencies and the public to be informed on what has been done about local problems.

Some officers use Twitter accounts to inform the community about what they are doing and display details of their Twitter accounts on their police name badges. There are currently 90 such social media accounts being used.

The force is focusing on increasing the involvement of local people to assist them. Notably, there are ambitions to increase the size of the special constabulary from 579 to 900 officers by May 2016. In addition, the force has a very active police cadet force which has some 250 members and it has appointed a cadet scheme director to drive the scheme forward. Currently cadets contribute to 'low risk' areas of policing, such as: helping at major sporting events; dealing with parking issues; and some anti-social behaviour problems.

There are around 110 volunteers working alongside officers and staff in a range of different roles. The force currently has a volunteer computer specialist to help tackle cyber-crime, and has special constables working as detectives. Local people also contribute their time in a range of local watch schemes, such as Neighbourhood watch and Speed watch.

From the survey, 29 percent of the respondents from the area covered by Northamptonshire Police speak highly of the police in their local area while 16 percent speak critically. The remainder have mixed views or do not know. Although not directly comparable because of the small force sample size, of the responses from across all forces in England and Wales, 32 percent speak highly and 16 percent speak critically.

To what extent are people treated fairly and with respect when they come into contact with police officers and staff?

Public bodies (including the police and other public authorities), are required to consider all individuals when carrying out their work, and understand how different people will be affected by their activities. The duty requires the police to be able to show evidence of this in their decision-making.

This inspection looked at whether all members of the public (including those with protected characteristics) were treated (and perceived that they were treated) fairly and with respect by the police. We also assessed the extent to which officers understood the National Decision Model,[13] the framework by which all policing decisions should be made, examined and challenged. The Code of Ethics is a central component of the National Decision Model.

The police have thousands of interactions with the public on a daily basis. Research indicates that the quality of the treatment received during encounters with the police is more important to individuals than the objective outcome of the interaction. Before we began our fieldwork activity, we listened to around 40 calls made from members of the public to the 101 (non-emergency) and 999 (emergency) numbers to assess the quality of the treatment received. In order to determine the overall quality of the call, we considered criteria including whether the call-handler remained polite, professional and respectful throughout the call, whether he or she took the caller's concerns seriously appropriately assessing the risk and urgency of the call, and how well he or she established the caller's needs, managed the caller's expectations and explained what would happen next.

Although not necessarily representative of all calls responded to by the force, from the 40 calls assessed, HMIC was satisfied that the call-handlers are polite, respectful and effective, and that the needs and vulnerabilities of callers are appropriately assessed.

All force control-room staff are given comprehensive training on how to deal with calls from the public and also on the communication skills they need to use to respond positively to callers and show the right levels of empathy to victims. Call-handlers display a high level of performance, a judgment supported by quality assurance work independently conducted within the force.

During our fieldwork we also observed front counter staff in their interaction with visitors at police stations, and enquiry office staff are polite, courteous and helpful to the public. The office of the PCC conducts 'mystery shopper' exercises to assess the

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[13] *College of Policing: Authorised Professional Practice on National Decision Model.* Available from: www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/

service provided by the enquiry offices and reports high levels of politeness and respect for people using them.

Northamptonshire Police introduced the National Decision Model (NDM) earlier than other forces and hence it has been using the model for many years. Consequently, the model is well established across the force.

Senior officers encourage supervisors and officers to use the NDM when making important decisions. They also show its importance by using it to structure a number of high-level force documents, such as operational plans.

The training department delivers NDM training at a number of levels from initial training, through to the public order and firearms training given to all senior officers who take charge of such incidents. All volunteers, cadets and special constabulary officers receive NDM training. Uniformed officers also receive updates on the NDM and many use an aide memoire.

Officers are familiar and confident using the model and a force survey found that 80 percent of staff agreed with the comment that they routinely use the model in their everyday decision-making.

When officers attend their officer safety training, the type of behaviour which leads to members of the public making complaints is explained to them. This 'lessons learned' approach is run in conjunction with the professional standards department to ensure the latest trends are understood. Student officers are also given a similar presentation to ensure they are aware of the standards expected.

Computer-based training packages about the NDM are used to facilitate officers' understanding of the Code of Ethics, and its completion is mandatory. The chief officer team frequently talk to officers about the values they wish them to draw on and the same messages are delivered at force leadership seminars for police managers and staff.

Officers have a sound knowledge and understanding of the Code of Ethics, as this is explored during training classes on the NDM. This understanding is reinforced by the use of a number of scenarios on how to carry out stop and search encounters. Instructors use the two-day officer safety training to demonstrate to officers how to conduct searches legally and safely and this includes guidance on positive and professional engagement with people they deal with.

From the survey, 56 percent of respondents from the area covered by Northamptonshire Police agree that the police in their local area treat people fairly and with respect versus 7 percent who disagree. The remainder neither agree nor disagree or do not know. Although not directly comparable because of the small force sample size, across all forces in England and Wales, the figures are 54 percent and 7 percent respectively.

Summary of findings

Good

Northamptonshire Police officers and staff have a good understanding of the need to build trust and confidence in the communities they serve. Some assessments of local communities and their policing needs are very clearly documented but there is not yet a consistent picture throughout the force. Local teams should have sufficient information available to them to improve their understanding of local communities.

The force has an effective way to identify and manage community tensions as they emerge through the use of Community Tension Assessments.

Social media is used by some officers to engage with communities and the force actively uses its website to feature positive news stories. Volunteers actively engage in a wide range of policing activities and this is positive.

Training on the National Decision Model is provided to all staff alongside the Code of Ethics, and most officers demonstrate a clear understanding of how to apply the model in their daily decision-making. This training is provided through a variety of different training methods. The chief constable repeatedly reinforces messages to staff about treating people fairly and properly.

Areas for improvement

- The force should take steps to ensure its local teams have sufficient information available to them to improve their understanding of local communities.

To what extent are decisions taken on the use of stop and search and Taser fair and appropriate?

Introduction

Fairness, and the perception of fairness, is crucial to police legitimacy. It is therefore important that fairness is demonstrated in all aspects of policing, including the use of police powers. Some of the most intrusive powers available to the police are those involving stopping and searching people and the use of Taser.[14]

In autumn 2015, HMIC assessed the use of Taser and stop and search powers (specifically, compliance with the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme[15] and how well reasonable grounds were recorded) to determine whether officers were using their powers fairly and in accordance with legal requirements and Authorised Professional Practice.

The inspection asked:

1. To what extent does the force ensure that it complies with the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme?

2. To what extent does the force ensure that Tasers are used fairly and appropriately?

To what extent does the force ensure that it complies with the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme?

Background

The primary role of the police is to uphold the law and maintain the peace. Unfair, unlawful or unnecessary use of stop and search powers makes this task harder, with one of the direct consequences being a reduction in public trust and police legitimacy, and people being more likely to break the law and less willing to co-operate with the police. The purpose of stop and search powers is to enable officers to dismiss or confirm suspicions about individuals carrying unlawful items without exercising their power of arrest. The officer must have reasonable grounds for carrying out a search.

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[14] *College of Policing: Authorised Professional Practice on armed policing – legal framework and Taser.* Available from: www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/

[15] *Best Use of Stop and Search scheme*, Home Office, 2014. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/best-use-of-stop-and-search-scheme

In our 2013 inspection on stop and search,[16] HMIC concluded that few forces could demonstrate that use of stop and search powers was based on an understanding of what works best to cut crime and rarely was it targeted at priority crimes in their areas. Forces had reduced the amount of data collected to reduce bureaucracy, but this had diminished their capability to understand the impact of the use of stop and search powers on crime levels and community confidence.

The report was clear that, for a stop and search encounter to be effective and lawful, a police officer must have reasonable grounds for suspicion (based on specific and objective information) that a person is in possession of a stolen or prohibited item. Those grounds should be fully explained to the person being stopped and searched, and the person should be treated with fairness, courtesy and respect. In such circumstances, finding the item and arresting the offender or, alternatively, eliminating the suspicion and avoiding an unnecessary arrest are both valid and successful outcomes.

Following HMIC's 2013 inspection, on 26 August 2014 the Home Office published guidance to police forces on implementing the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme.

The principal aims of the scheme are for the police: to establish greater transparency and community involvement in the use of stop and search powers; and to make sure that the powers are used in an intelligence-led way to achieve better outcomes for the public.

All police forces in England and Wales have signed up to the Home Office's Best Use of Stop and Search scheme. This inspection considered the extent to which forces are complying with the scheme.

Use of stop and search in Northamptonshire Police – Stop and search by volume

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, Northamptonshire Police carried out 4,579 stops and searches. The table below shows this number per 1,000 population for Northamptonshire Police and the average of its most similar group of forces, as well as the change from the 12 months to 31 March 2014. The figures indicate that the force's use of stop and search powers is currently in line with the average of its most similar group of forces.

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[16] *Stop and Search Powers – are the police using them effectively and fairly?,* HMIC, July 2013. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/media/stop-and-search-powers-20130709.pdf

Figure 6: Number of stops and searches per 1,000 population carried out by Northamptonshire Police compared to the average of its most similar group (MSG) of forces, 12 months to 31 March 2015, and the percentage change from the 12 months to 31 March 2014

|	Stops and searches per 1,000	Change from previous year
Northamptonshire	6.4	-47%
Northamptonshire's MSG average	5.6	-25%

Sources: Home Office Stop and Search data, Police Powers and Procedures 2014/15 and Office for National Statistics mid-2014 population estimates

Use of stop and search in Northamptonshire Police – Stop and search by ethnicity

HMIC looked at the published data on stops and searches by ethnicity and compared them with the most recent local population data by ethnicity (the 2011 Census). The data suggested that BAME people were statistically more likely to be stopped and searched by Northamptonshire Police than white people. However, of the individuals who had been stopped and searched, there was no statistical difference in the likelihood of arrest by the force between BAME people and white people.

Figure 7: A comparison between the likelihood of BAME and white people being stopped and searched and, separately, arrested following stop and search by Northamptonshire Police, 12 months to 31 March 2015
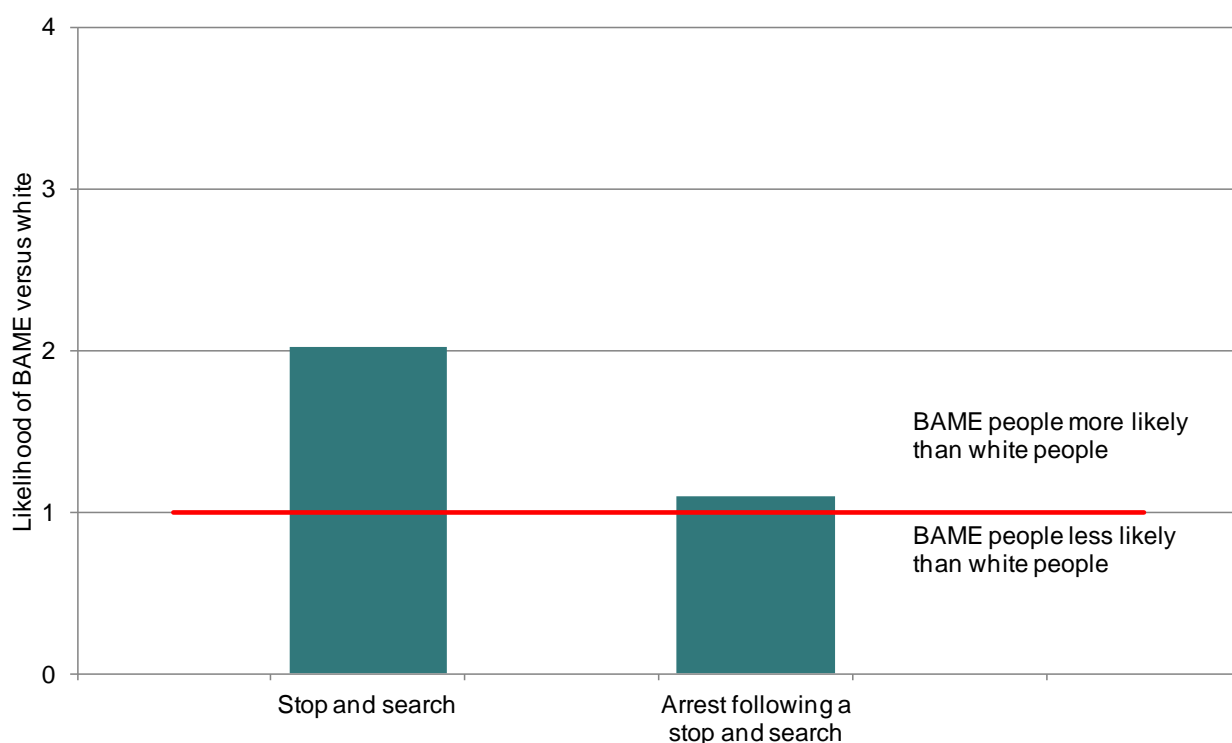
Sources: Home Office Stop and Search data, Police Powers and Procedures 2014/15 and Office for National Statistics 2011 Census

Caution needs to be taken before drawing assumptions from these data, especially where they might appear to suggest that forces are unfairly targeting particular ethnicities in their use of stop and search powers. Although that is one possible explanation, there are a number of other factors which could result in any disparity, including:

- the 2011 ethnicity figures no longer being representative of the force's local population;

- the difference between the ethnicity of the street population available to be stopped and searched at any given time with the general force population;

- stops and searches being carried out on people who are not resident in the area (and so are not counted as part of the population);

- disparity in the crime rates between different ethnicities;

- disparity in the number of repeat stops and searches carried out on individuals by ethnicity; or

- difficulties with the recorded data by ethnicity (while forces always record ethnicity when arresting a person as a result of being stopped and searched, they do not always record it when the encounter does not involve an arrest).

It is important that forces understand their data along with reasons for any apparent disparity to ensure that their use of the powers is fair.

Recording reasonable grounds for suspicion

In our 2013 inspection,[17] HMIC was very concerned to see that, of the 8,783 stop and search records we examined across all forces in England and Wales, 27 percent did not include sufficient reasonable grounds to justify the lawful use of the power. The explanation for this included low levels of understanding of what constitutes reasonable grounds, poor supervision, and an absence of oversight by senior officers.

For Northamptonshire Police, the 2013 inspection showed that all of the 200 records reviewed (100 percent) did not have sufficient reasonable grounds recorded. This was due to the 'tick box' nature of the record, which provided no opportunity for the officer to record a free text description of the grounds. Consequently none of the records contained reasonable grounds and supervisors were unable to supervise the records effectively.

For this inspection we reviewed 98 stop and search records provided by the force. As in the 2013 inspection, we reviewed the records to determine if reasonable grounds were recorded. Since 2013, the force has changed its recording procedure and now provides sufficient space on the stop and search record for officers to record the full grounds. All of the records we reviewed had been endorsed by a supervisor. We found that three of the 98 records did not have reasonable grounds recorded (3 percent).

There is a 'reasonable grounds panel', chaired by a senior officer, and including members of the public, which regularly reviews the reasonable grounds from a sample of records. The force has also provided excellent guidance to officers on how reasonable grounds should be written and most importantly guidance on what does, and does not, constitute reasonable grounds.

While the records we reviewed may not be representative of all stop and search records completed by the force, the result indicates that, notwithstanding the procedural changes set out above, some records still do not have reasonable grounds recorded.

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[17] *Stop and Search Powers – are the police using them effectively and fairly?* HMIC, July 2013. Available from www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/media/stop-and-search-powers-20130709.pdf

Compliance with the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme

There are several aspects to the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme. As part of this inspection, HMIC considered the extent to which the force complied with each aspect of the scheme. Our analysis is set out in the table below.

In April 2015, the force introduced a new stop and search policy indicating a determination to comply with the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme. It is clear that good progress has been made, and the force complies with almost all the elements of the scheme. There is a good awareness of the scheme among officers.

A lay observer scheme is a requirement of the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme which allows members of the public to observe and comment upon stops and searches. Northamptonshire Police appealed through local media and other channels for individuals willing to take part in a ride-along scheme but it has been unsuccessful in securing any applicants. The force is therefore using its 'reasonable grounds panel' to review stop and search and is arranging further opportunities for the public to observe stop and search.

The force does not yet use any available footage from body-worn video cameras, carried by officers, to be part of the work of the panel in reviewing stop and search. Additionally, the force selects which stop and search records are reviewed by the panel, and selects cases where a problem is thought to exist. The panel would be able to form a more balanced and rounded view of the force's approach to the use of stop and search powers if it decided for itself the forms it reviewed as well as observing the stop and search body-worn video footage.

The force has introduced a policy that suspends an officer's use of stop and search if they repeatedly fail to demonstrate that they are using the powers appropriately. Unsatisfactory performance procedures can also be considered in cases where officers, following intensive training and management intervention, are unable to demonstrate that they can use the powers appropriately.

As part of the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme the force has introduced a community trigger which is activated when more than five complaints about stop and search encounters are made in any one month. This we consider to be a high bar to reach before a community trigger is activated. There are also triggers regarding the percentage of individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds being searched and there is a working group, with a number of volunteer independent members on it, which regularly reviews the breakdown of age, gender and ethnicity of people being searched within the county.

Authorisations under Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, which authorise officers to stop and search people in a given area without suspecting they are in possession of a stolen or prohibited article, are now made by an officer of

at least assistant chief constable rank and there are now ways of advising any affected community in advance of it taking place. Only one such authorisation has occurred since the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme's introduction.

Northamptonshire Police records almost all of the outcomes required by the scheme, but does not record community resolutions, although it does record if the item searched for is found and if the outcome is linked to the item originally searched for. Of the 100 records reviewed, the item searched for was recorded as having been found in 24 of the records reviewed.

When the reasonable grounds panel reviews individual stop and search records, it considers whether proper use has been made of the NDM. The force has tried to bring the work of the panel to the attention of all frontline officers. Some officers, however, do not know of the existence of the panel and others are unclear about the way it reviews their decisions about individual stops and searches. Further clarification of the panel's role will help ensure officers are not apprehensive about the consequences of conducting a search.

The PCC has commissioned an independent review of the approach to stop and search, which is due to report in spring 2016. The College of Policing has described the force's approach to the development of stop and search as 'innovative and forward thinking'. The force has also won an international award for the way it is striving to improve the quality of search procedures in the county.

Close monitoring of the way officers use their powers is improving legitimacy by appropriate, intelligence-led use of stop and search.

Feature of the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme	HMIC assessment of compliance
Recording and publishing the outcomes following a stop and search	The force does not comply with this feature of the scheme. Northamptonshire Police records almost all of the outcomes required by the scheme, but does not record community resolutions. However, the force does record if the item searched for is found and if the outcome is linked to the item originally searched for. While the force publishes most requirements it does not publish community resolutions or whether items searched for were found. Some data are published on the police.uk website and, while there is a link from the force's website directing people to the police.uk website, data are not published in respect of the full range of outcomes or the connection between the items searched for and the outcomes.
Providing opportunities for the public to observe officers using the power	The force does not comply with this feature of the scheme. The force has been active in trying to recruit volunteers for a lay observation or ride-along scheme, but there has been no uptake to date.
Explaining to communities how the powers are being used following a "community complaint"	The force complies with this feature of the scheme.
Reducing the number of people stopped and searched without suspicion under section 60[18] of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994	The force complies with this feature of the scheme.
Monitoring the impact of stop and search – particularly on young people and black, Asian and minority ethnic groups	The force complies with this feature of the scheme.

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[18] 'No suspicion' searches are provided for under section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. Available from: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/33/section/60

To what extent does the force ensure that Tasers are used fairly and appropriately?

Background

Taser is a device designed to temporarily incapacitate a person through use of an electrical current which temporarily interferes with the body's neuromuscular system. This usually causes the person to freeze or fall over, giving officers time to restrain them.

It projects a pair of barbs or darts attached to insulated wires which attach to the subject's skin or clothing. The device has a maximum range of 21 feet and delivers its electrical charge in a five-second cycle which can be stopped, extended or repeated.

It is one of a number of tactical options available to police officers when dealing with an incident where there is the potential for harm – to potential victims and/or the public, the police officers themselves, or the subject.

The way a Taser is used by police officers is categorised into a range of escalating actions from drawing the device, through to it being 'discharged' (that is, fired, drive-stunned or angled drive-stunned). A table in Annex D outlines the definitions of the different levels of use.

When police are required to use force to achieve a lawful objective, such as making a lawful arrest, acting in self-defence or protecting others, that force must be reasonable in the circumstances. If it is not, the officer is open to criminal or misconduct proceedings. It may also constitute a violation of the human rights of the person against whom the force was used.

HMIC has not previously inspected how Taser is used either in, or between, forces. This inspection considered whether chief officers understand how Taser is being used across the force area, to satisfy themselves that it is being used fairly and appropriately, and whether Taser-trained officers are acting in accordance with the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice and the legal framework each time it is used.[19]

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[19] *College of Policing: Authorised Professional Practice on armed policing – legal framework and Taser.* Available from www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/
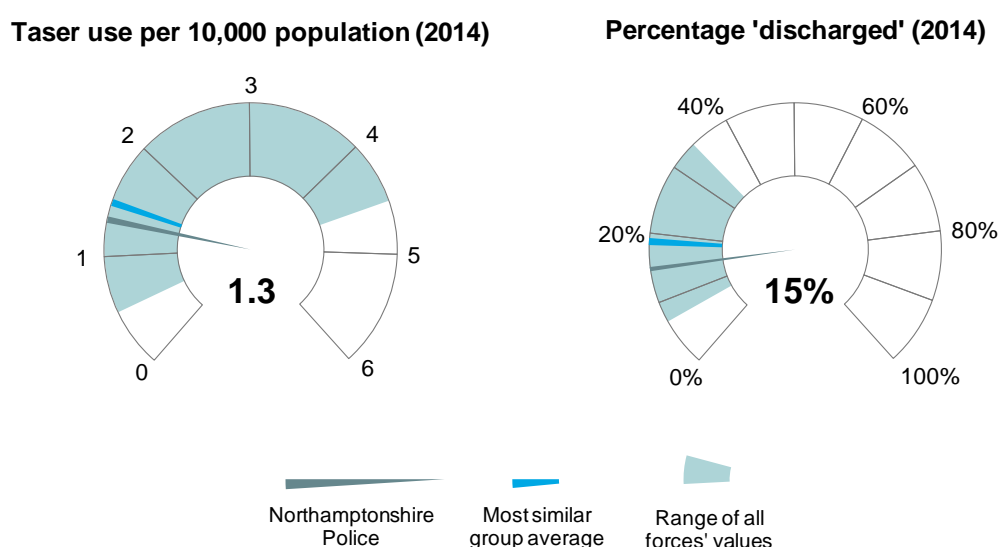
Use of Taser in Northamptonshire Police

Every time a Taser is used in some capacity (this includes a full range of use from being drawn to being 'discharged') a police officer makes a record of its 'highest use' on a Taser deployment form.

Between 1 January and 31 December 2014, Taser was used in some capacity 94 times by Northamptonshire Police, representing 1.3 times for every 10,000 people in the force's area. This was broadly in line with the average for Northamptonshire Police's most similar group of forces, which was 1.5 times per 10,000 population.

During the same time period, Taser was 'discharged' on 14 occasions (out of the 94 times it was used in some capacity). This equates to 15 percent of overall use, less than the force's most similar group average of 19 percent. However, because of the low number of times Taser was used in Northamptonshire Police, comparisons with other forces should be treated with caution. The following figure shows these comparisons.

Figure 8: Use of Taser per 10,000 population and the proportion 'discharged' by Northamptonshire Police, 12 months to 31 December 2014[20]

Taser use per 10,000 population (2014)

Percentage 'discharged' (2014)

Northamptonshire Police   Most similar group average   Range of all forces' values

Sources: Office for National Statistics mid-2014 population estimates and Home Office Police use of Taser statistics

The Taser deployment form is a national document for gathering research information about the operational effectiveness of the Taser device, and any medical implications of its use. If officers fire the Taser, or if they use it in drive-stun or angled drive-stun mode, they are required to complete the full form, including a detailed description of the incident from commencement to resolution. The National Decision Model (NDM) is used on the form as a structure for officers to record this description.

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[20] City of London Police data was removed from figure 8 because of the very low number of times Taser was used by the City of London Police in 2014.

For any other use, such as 'drawn', 'aimed', 'red-dotted' or 'arced', officers are only required to provide brief details of the incident. A detailed description, structured around the NDM, is not required.

Before the fieldwork stage of the inspection, HMIC conducted a review of 57 Taser deployment forms and linked documentation provided by the East Midlands Operational Support Services (EMOpSS) collaboration. Although the findings of this review are not necessarily representative of all Taser forms completed by the collaboration, they do provide an indication of its Taser activity. Of the 57 forms reviewed, Taser had been fired eight times, red-dotted 31 times, arced seven times, aimed twice, and drawn nine times. For the eight times the Taser had been fired and the NDM completed, we found evidence that consideration of other tactics had been recorded in all cases.

Officers used Taser to protect themselves or others from a range of weapons, including several knives, a police baton and door enforcer that had been taken from fellow officers, machetes, handguns, a hatchet, a meat cleaver, a shotgun and a cutthroat razor.

The information contained in the Taser deployment forms provided us with sufficient evidence to suggest that the use of Taser was fair and appropriate in all cases reviewed, except two. On these occasions the NDM was not required to be recorded, and the 'brief details' section of the form did not contain sufficient information for us to make an assessment. Where officers had been required to record their rationale in the NDM section, we found that a number of them appeared to be unclear about how to record the threat assessment in accordance with the College of Policing training. However, in all cases the use of Taser did appear to be lawful.

None of the forms contained any mention of the national Code of Ethics for the police service which is at the heart of the NDM and should be considered at each stage, particularly under the 'Powers and Policy' section. However, one officer did consider the force's statement of mission and values. This appears to be a national issue and is considered in our national Legitimacy report.

Taser devices are only issued by the force to specialist officers including firearms, some traffic officers, dog patrol officers and tactical support unit staff. All these officers work within the combined regional operational support unit (EMOpSS) which includes officers from three other neighbouring forces. Taser-trained officers in Northamptonshire have a good understanding of the relevant legislation and authorised professional practice. Similarly, these officers have no difficulties in explaining how they utilise the National Decision Model when considering their use of Taser.

Although some officers are uncertain about the availability of Taser units to assist them, particularly in more rural locations, the force has carried out work to determine its needs and ensure an adequate response to incidents where Taser may be necessary.

The force actively records, monitors and evaluates Taser use across the force area and it regularly reviews the need for Taser within the firearms strategic threat and risk assessment.

On each occasion that an officer uses a Taser they are expected to submit a Taser usage form. This is subsequently supervised to ensure that the use is fair and appropriate. It also allows the force to monitor in detail such use.

Northamptonshire Police does not publish information to the public on its use of Taser, which could improve transparency and legitimacy about the use of Taser

Based on an assessment of the Taser forms and fieldwork findings, Taser is being used fairly and appropriately by Northamptonshire Police.

Summary of findings

Good

Northamptonshire Police is implementing the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme and most of the aspects of the scheme are already in place. Officers are now significantly better at recording the grounds leading to any stop and search.

Taser is being used fairly and appropriately by Northamptonshire Police. Taser devices are only issued by the force to specialist officers within the East Midlands Operational Support Services (EMOpSS), which includes officers from three other neighbouring forces.

Officers are well trained and understand their responsibility to consider all tactical options when deploying Taser.

Areas for improvement

- The force must ensure that Taser-trained offers properly understand and record their decisions using the NDM in accordance with the College of Policing training.

Annex A – HMIC judgments

The categories are:

- outstanding;

- good;

- requires improvement; and

- inadequate.

Judgment is made against how legitimate the force is at keeping people safe and reducing crime, it is not an assessment of the overall legitimacy of policing. In applying the categories HMIC considers whether:

- the legitimacy of the force is achieving is good, or exceeds this standard sufficiently to be judged as outstanding;

- the legitimacy of the force requires improvement, and/or there are some weaknesses; or

- the legitimacy of the force is inadequate because it is considerably lower than is expected.

Annex B – Data methodology

Please note the following for the data.

- The sources of the data are provided in each section. For the force in numbers data, please see the relevant section.

- Workforce figures (based on full-time equivalents) were obtained from the Home Office annual data return 502. Most of these are available from the Home Office's published *Police workforce England and Wales statistics*, although figures may have been updated since the publication.

- Police staff includes section 38 designated officers (investigation, detention and escort).

- Data from the Office for National Statistics 2011 Census were used for the number and proportion of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people within each force area. While the numbers may have since changed, more recent figures are based only on estimates from surveys or projections.

- HMIC has been made aware of updates from particular forces on their Taser and stop and search data. However, for fairness and consistency, we have presented the data as published by the relevant sources.

Please note the following for the methodology applied to the data.

- Comparisons with most similar group of forces – In most cases, comparisons are made with the average of the force's most similar group (MSG) of forces. These are forces that have been found to be the most similar to the force in question, based on an analysis of demographic, social and economic characteristics which relate to crime. The following forces are in Northamptonshire Police's MSG: Cheshire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Kent, Avon and Somerset, Essex and Nottinghamshire.

- Comparisons with averages – For some data sets, we state whether the force's value is 'below', 'above' or 'broadly in line with' the average. To calculate this, the difference to the mean average, as a proportion, is calculated for all forces. After standardising this distribution, forces that are more than half a standard deviation from the mean average are determined to be above or below the average, with all other forces being broadly in line.

  In practice this means that, very approximately, a third of forces are above, a third are below, and the remaining third are in line with the average for each measure. For this reason, the distance from the average required to make a

force's value above or below the average is different for each measure so may not appear to be consistent.

- Statistical significance – When commenting on statistical differences, we use a significance level of 5 percent.

Ipsos MORI survey

The national survey was conducted with a sample of 26,057 people aged 16 plus across England and Wales, between 15 July and 6 August 2015. All interviews were conducted online through Ipsos MORI's online panel.

The Ipsos MORI online panel consists of a pre-recruited group of individuals or multiple individuals within households who have agreed to take part in online market and social research surveys. The panel is refreshed continually using a variety of sources and methods.

Respondents to this survey were recruited using an email invitation including a link to the online questionnaire. The survey invitations were managed to achieve robust numbers of interviews in each force area in order to provide indicative results at a force level. Final numbers of responses per force area ranged from 353 to 1,278.

Responses are based on all participants completing the relevant survey question. Results are weighted within the force area to the local age, gender and work status profile of the area, and an additional weight has been applied to the overall total to reflect the population breakdown by force area.

Annex C – The Best Use of Stop and Search scheme

The scheme includes a number of features with the aim of achieving greater transparency, community involvement in the use of stop and search powers and supporting a more intelligence-led approach, leading to better outcomes.

Recording and publishing outcomes

The Best Use of Stop and Search scheme requires forces to record and publish the following outcomes from the use of stop and search powers:

- Arrest;

- Summons/charged by post;

- Caution (simple or conditional);

- Khat or cannabis warning;

- Penalty notice for disorder;

- Community resolution; and

- No further action.

Forces adopting the scheme should therefore be providing the public with a much richer picture of how their use of stop and search powers are enabling them to reduce crime rates. The scheme also requires forces to show the link, or lack of one, between the object of the search (what the officer was looking for) and the outcome. This link helps to show how accurate officers' reasonable grounds for suspicion are by showing the rate at which they find what they were searching for during the stop and search.

Providing opportunities for the public to observe stop and search encounters

A core element of the scheme is the requirement that participating forces will provide opportunities for members of the public to accompany police officers on patrol when they might use stop and search powers.

It is important for the public, particularly young people and people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, to be able to see the police conducting their work in a professional way. Equally, it is also important for the police to understand the communities they serve – as this enables more effective policing through community co-operation and exemplifies 'policing by consent'.

By introducing 'lay observation', a process of two-way learning can take place, bringing the police closer to the public.

Implementing a community trigger for complaints

The scheme requires forces to implement a community complaints trigger to signpost the appropriate mechanism for members of the community to raise any concerns or complaints that they have with the way that a stop and search has been carried out by their police force. When the trigger is activated, the scheme requires forces to explain the use of the powers to community scrutiny groups.

Authorising searches under section 60 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994

Section 60 stop and search powers are among the most controversial of all such powers by virtue of the fact that individual police officers can stop and search a person without the need to have reasonable grounds for suspicion.

Once a section 60 authorisation is in place, officers do not need to have suspicions about a particular individual prior to stopping them; though an officer must explain to an individual who has been stopped that a section 60 authorisation is in place. This can lead to a large number of searches which result in community and police tensions. The scheme introduces a set of requirements that, when combined, will ensure that participating forces improve their use of this type of stop and search power. These include raising the authorisation level from inspector to senior officer (assistant chief constable or above), restricting the time a section 60 authorisation can be in force to 15 hours and communicating the purpose and outcomes of each section 60 authorisation in advance (where possible) and afterwards.

Monitoring the use of stop and search powers

The scheme requires forces to monitor the use of stop and search powers, in particular to determine their impact on black, Asian and minority ethnic people and young people.

Annex D – Types of use of Taser

Type of use   Definition[21]

Type of use	Definition[21]
Fired	The Taser is fired with a live cartridge installed. When the trigger is pulled, the probes are fired towards the subject with the intention of completing an electrical circuit and delivering an incapacitating effect.
Angled drive-stun	The officer fires the weapon with a live cartridge installed. One or both probes may attach to the subject. The officer then holds the Taser against the subject's body in a different area to the probe(s), in order to complete the electrical circuit and deliver an incapacitating effect.
Drive-stun	The Taser is held against the subject's body without a live cartridge installed, and the trigger is pulled with no probes being fired. Contact with the subject completes the electrical circuit which causes pain but does not deliver an incapacitating effect.
Red dot	The weapon is not fired. Instead, the Taser is deliberately aimed and then partially activated so that a laser red dot is placed onto the subject.
Arcing	Sparking of the Taser as a visible deterrent without aiming it or firing it.
Aimed	Deliberate aiming of the Taser at a targeted subject.
Drawn	Drawing of Taser in circumstances where any person could reasonably perceive the action as a use of force.

Tasers that have been 'discharged' are those that have been fired, angled drive-stunned or drive-stunned.

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[21] *Police use of Taser statistics, England and Wales: 1 January to 31 December 2014*, Home Office, 2015. Available from www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-use-of-taser-statistics-england-and-wales-1-january-to-31-december-2014.