

Home Secretary launches Best Use of Stop and Search scheme

From:

[Home Office](#) and [The Rt Hon Theresa May MP](#)

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All police forces in England and Wales have signed up to the voluntary scheme.



Home Secretary Theresa May today officially launched a new scheme to reform police use of stop and search powers.

While stop and search is undoubtedly an important police power, when it is misused it can be counter-productive. It can be an enormous waste of police time and, when innocent people are stopped and searched for no good reason, it is hugely damaging to the relationship between the police and public.

The Best Use of Stop and Search scheme, which was announced by the Home Secretary in April, is designed to contribute to a significant reduction in the overall use of stop and search, deliver better and more intelligence-led stop and search, and improve stop-to-arrest ratios. It will also provide the public with further information on the outcome of searches.

About the scheme

Today the Home Secretary revealed that all 43 police forces in England and Wales have signed up to the voluntary scheme and 24 will implement two key elements immediately. Those 24 forces will:

- Increase transparency by recording all outcomes of stop and search and whether there is a connection between the grounds for the search and the outcome.
- Restrict the use of Section 60 “no suspicion” powers. Already used only when necessary, under this scheme a chief officer must make the decision whether to authorise the use of such powers. In cases where the chief officer anticipates serious violence, that officer must reasonably believe that violence “will” rather than “may” take place, as it stands now.

By November, all 43 forces will have implemented all aspects of the scheme, including:

- Giving members of the public the opportunity to observe stop and search in practice.
- Introducing a community complaints trigger, so the police must explain to the public how stop and search powers are being used after a large volume of complaints.

Home Secretary Theresa May said:

Nobody wins when stop and search is misused. It can be an enormous waste of police time and damage the relationship between the public and police.

I am delighted that all 43 police forces have signed up to the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme. It will increase transparency, give us a better understanding of how stop and search is actually being used and help local communities hold the police to account for their use of the powers.

I hope it will also go a long way to building public confidence and forging an important link between communities and the police.

Chief Executive of the College of Policing, Chief Constable Alex Marshall, said:

Stop and search powers are necessary to help us tackle crime and keep people safe but it is clear that they are being misused too often. This can leave resentment in our communities and hinder our ability to prevent crime.

Every police force in England and Wales has today committed to the best use of stop and search scheme to improve the way we use these important powers. Under this scheme search outcomes will be recorded in more detail so we have a greater understanding of how

the powers are being used. Searches which do not require reasonable grounds of suspicion will reduce and communities will have greater powers to question police over their use of stop and search.

The College of Policing will play our part by reviewing and developing the evidence-base, training and guidance so that police officers at every level in the service are equipped with the right knowledge and skills to conduct effective stop and search. We have already built links with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to look at whether unconscious bias is affecting officers' use of stop and search.

There are many areas of good practice where stop and search has reduced, the quality of encounter has gone up and arrest ratios increased. The College will be sharing that across the country so that we see the changes needed to ensure that the communities we serve have confidence in their police officers to use these important powers proportionately, effectively and fairly.

Consultation

The announcement included the launch of a consultation to revise the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act Code of Practice A. Consultation on the code, which governs the police's use of stop and search, will last eight weeks.

Stop and Search data mapping

Stop and search data will also be available on data.police.uk from today. The additional information which forces will capture as a result of the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme will be published on this website in due course.

In addition, the Home Secretary announced that West Mercia Police will pilot the geographic mapping of stops and searches, ahead of a national roll-out in the New Year, to further increase transparency and accountability.