

July 9, 2013

Police Response To 'Stop and Search' Report

Responding to the HMIC report on the use of Stop and Search powers, Bedfordshire Police Chief Constable Colette Paul said:

“Stop and Search is an essential tool in helping Bedfordshire Police to achieve its aim of fighting crime and protecting the public. The law requires officers to have reasonable grounds to suspect an individual of being in possession of articles that amount to evidence of an offence before searching them. Where such grounds exist, we will search individuals in order to prevent and detect crime.

The report published today shows Bedfordshire has good leadership of this tactic and has increased its use to reduce violent crime which I would argue is a positive move in direct response to the increased use of firearms in Luton in particular. I will not apologise for this and we will continue with this method of policing in consultation with those communities affected, in order to achieve our aim of fighting crime and protecting the public.

The use of 'stop and search' remains an important tool to tackle knife, gun and gang crimes and terrorism but should always be used in a proportionate way. It is a tactic which is most effective when it has the support of communities and achieving a balance which ensures transparency around the way it is used. The HMIC report shows that Bedfordshire is using this tool effectively but we are not complacent and we are always reviewing and learning from our experiences of this tactic and from feedback from our communities.”

Ends

Background information on Stop and Search:

Bedfordshire Police uses 'Stop and Search' to look for items such as stolen property, drugs, dangerous weapons or the tools used to commit crime. The effective use of drug searches creates a hostile operating environment for those who deal in illegal substances. Our weapons searches seek to remove knives, firearms and other offensive weapons from circulation, preventing serious harm and keeping Bedfordshire safe.

Targeting 'Stop and Search' is effective in identifying offenders and deterring individuals from committing crime or anti-social behaviour. In Bedfordshire we target 'Stop and Search' in places where 'intelligence' tells us that offenders are operating or where we know that crimes are being committed. On occasion Police Officers use their professional judgment to decide if necessary to carry out a 'Stop and Search'.

Bedfordshire Police believes the proactive and rigorous use of 'Stop and Search' powers, deters, disrupts and detects criminal activity, street crime and antisocial behaviour and in doing so secures safety, justice and reassurance for all, helping to catch criminals and keep people safe and build public trust and confidence

Accurate recoding provides us with an understanding of where, when and on whom our searches are being conducted. This is essential to enable us to identify disproportionality and dispel any myths, allegations or perceptions of disproportionality taking place. We treat any misuse of the powers or related complaints seriously. All Officers are trained in the lawful use of 'Stop and Search' and Officers must treat those they search with respect and dignity.