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Bedfordshire Stop and Search and Use of Force Scrutiny Panel

December 2025 -
Quarterly Bulletin



Use of Force Data

2340

In Q3 (October to December), there were 2,340 Use of Force records, reflecting a 6% decrease compared to the previous quarter, which recorded 2,491 incidents.

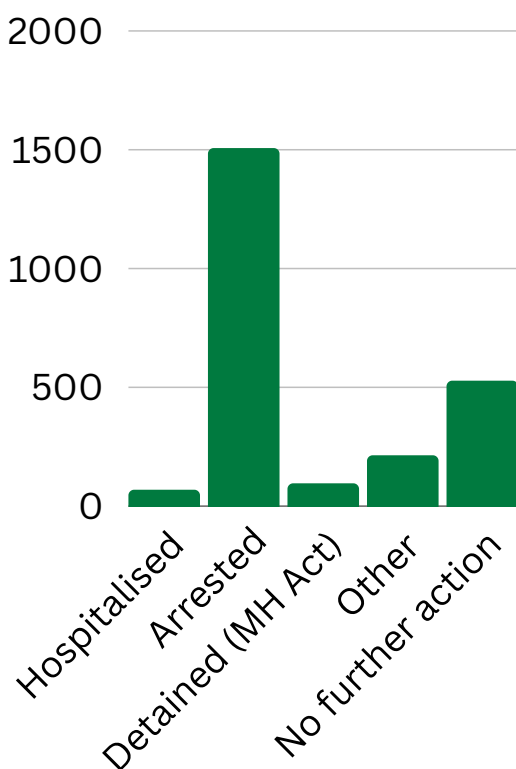
64.4% of all Use of Force incidents resulted in an arrest, up slightly from 63.4% in the previous quarter.

64.4%

The table below shows the proportionality rates for Q3 2025. This quarter, there has been an 8.6% decrease in subjects perceived as Black ethnicity.

Qtr. 3 25-26				
Perceived Ethnicity	Number of Use of Force	Population	Per 1,000 Population	Ratio
White	1397	507,517	2.75	1
Black	457	39,601	11.54	4.19
Asian	423	116,909	3.62	1.31
Mixed / Other	35	40,709	0.86	0.31
Unknown	28			
	2340	704,736		

*Unknown includes 2 labelled as mz



The panel has repeatedly raised concerns about the 'Unknown' category, where no subject information has been recorded. This is currently under investigation to determine whether the issue lies with the system or the recording process. Encouragingly, the number of cases in this category has now decreased, with only 2 being labelled as 'mz'.

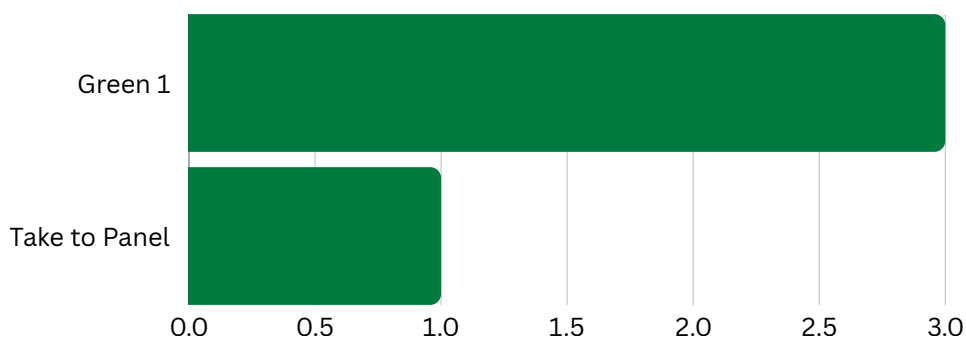
The chart to the left illustrates the outcomes of Use of Force incidents, with the majority resulting in the arrest of the subject.

Section 163

What have we seen this quarter?

This quarter, the panel reviewed and graded four Section 163 incidents, across both Bedford and Luton.

The graph below illustrates the gradings assigned to the S163 cases reviewed by the scrutiny panel.



Feedback on Section 163 videos viewed:

The scrutiny panel noted several positive aspects across the three videos graded Green 1, including:

- Officers displayed a professional and polite manner.
- Officers demonstrated clear and justifiable grounds for stopping vehicles.
- Body-Worn Video (BWV) was activated promptly.

One additional video was submitted for review by the main panel; however, due to time constraints, it was not viewed or graded. This will be shown at the next sub panel to grade.

Learning point identified:

- Ensure the subject is moved off the road when being questioned, for safety reasons.



Focus Areas

At the start of the quarter, the data panel reviewed stop and search data and use of force data from the previous quarter. The panel identified key trends and patterns that warranted closer attention and determined the areas of focus for this quarter.

Below are the trends highlighted by the panel and the topics they based their video selection on.

Use of Force Quarter Focus

- Black Males
- 16–19-year-olds
- Injury particularly within a blue light vehicle (ambulance)
- Top searching officers -The panel identified increased use of force from a specific team. Reviewing this team will help provide assurance that: They are completing the correct paperwork (which may highlight gaps in other teams), or there are concerns regarding the level of force used.
- One video on each of the following: dog deployment, firearms deployment, and Taser deployment.

Stop and Search Quarter Focus

- Central Beds due to higher disproportionality
- Drugs
- Black and Asian Males
- Ages between 20-24 due to increase
- Ages 16-19 as they are disproportionality stopped
- Stops that lead to Strip Search particularly those in Bedford
- Protest

What have we seen?

During this quarter, the panel reviewed a total of 27 video recordings, two more than in the previous quarter. These included:

- 12 Stop and Search videos
- 11 Use of Force videos
- 4 Section 163 (S163) videos

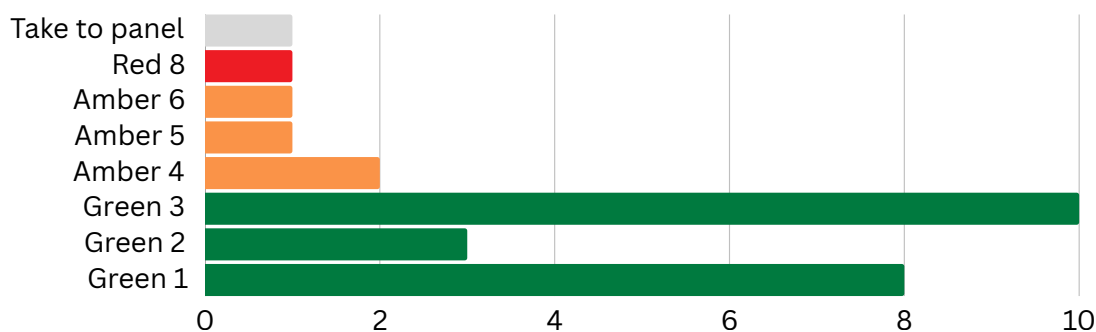
The scrutiny panel grades each video using a traffic light system: Green, Amber, and Red.

The table below shows the grading outcomes for all 27 videos reviewed. Of these, 21 were graded Green, 4 Amber, 1 Red, and 1 was sent to the main panel but not graded due to time constraints.

The amber gradings highlighted areas for improvement and learning, particularly around lack of control of the situation, vague grounds, the need for better verbal communication, and some elements of GOWISELY being missed.

The Amber 5 grading was not directed at the officers; it was intended for training and organisational learning purposes, specifically to highlight the risks associated with officers administering medication.

Regarding the Red 8, the panel were divided in their views on this interaction. Some members found no concerns with the use of force, while others considered the interaction concerning. The grading ranged from G1 to R8, with R8 receiving the highest number of votes. Feedback included suggestions for alternative use-of-force options, concerns about the officer escalating the situation, and a lack of control by officers.



Organisational learning

Risks of Officers Administering Medication

Panel members observed an incident where officers administered medication to a subject they were dealing with. This practice raises health and safety concerns and can lead to serious risks, as the medication may not belong to the subject and could have negative implications. The panel highlighted that such actions could expose both the subject and the officers to liability and operational risk. Instead, officers should seek immediate medical assistance from qualified professionals when required.

Panel Observation: Officers not using earpieces

Panel members observed that officers were not using their earpieces and were instead listening to their Airwave radios out loud. This increases the risk that intelligence or other sensitive information transmitted over the airwaves could be overheard by passersby or by individuals being directly dealt with by officers.

Officers speaking to subjects on the road

Health and safety concerns were raised after panel members observed that, in a couple of stops, officers engaged with subjects while they were standing on the road rather than moving them to the pavement. This practice introduces significant risk, as both officers and subjects are exposed to potential hazards from passing vehicles, reduced visibility, and distractions during the interaction.

Panel members agreed that it would be safer and operationally sound to relocate subjects to the pavement or another secure area before continuing the engagement.

Independent Office



for Police Conduct Workshop

As part of the panel's commitment to continuous learning and gaining diverse perspectives beyond those of the force, the Stop and Search scrutiny panel recently participated in a workshop session delivered by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). This session provided a valuable opportunity to deepen understanding of the IOPC's role, responsibilities, and independent oversight within policing. It offered an alternative viewpoint that aids the panel's own scrutiny work, particularly in areas relating to accountability and transparency.

The workshop was highly engaging and informative, and facilitated a constructive discussion and enabled panel members to explore best practices in independent oversight. The insights gained will help strengthen the panel's ability to challenge and support the force effectively.



Freshers Fair 2025



The OPCC recently attended the Bedfordshire University Fayre in October 2025. This was a fantastic opportunity for the team to connect with a younger demographic and discuss the use of police powers, as well as how they can hold the police force to account by joining our panels. As a result, we generated significant interest and awareness and received several applications.

It was also great to have members from our Stop and Search Panel join us to help. Their presence gave young people a volunteer's perspective and the chance to ask any questions they had. A big thank you to Simon and Ambrose.

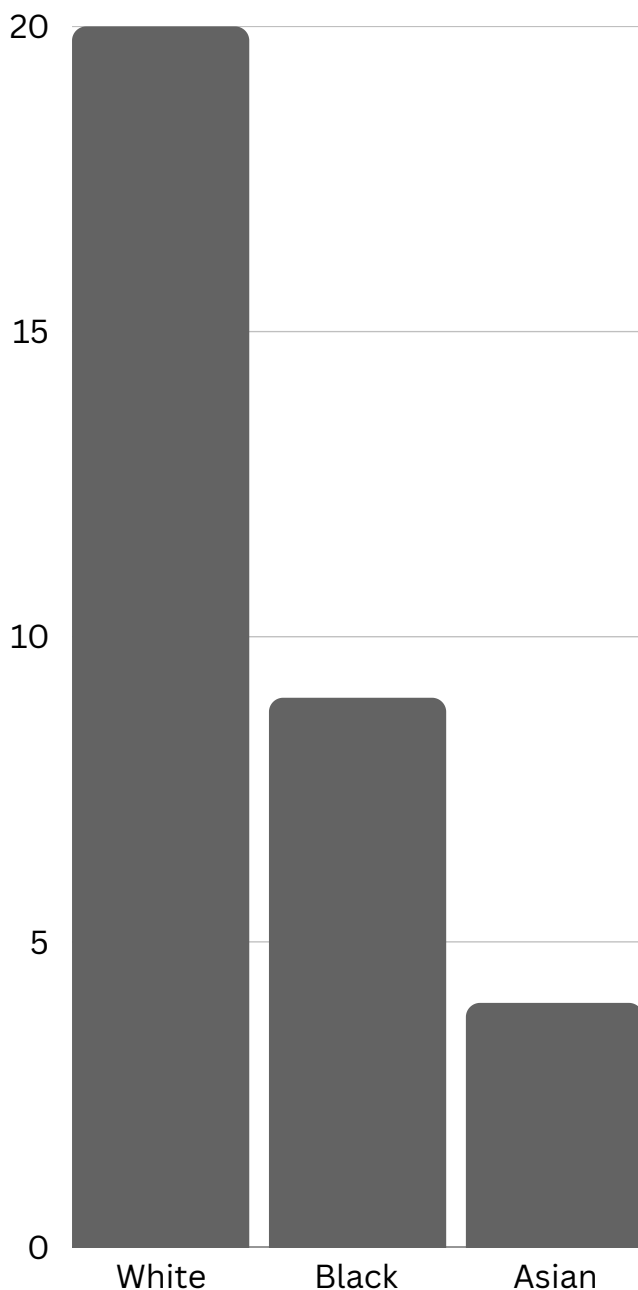
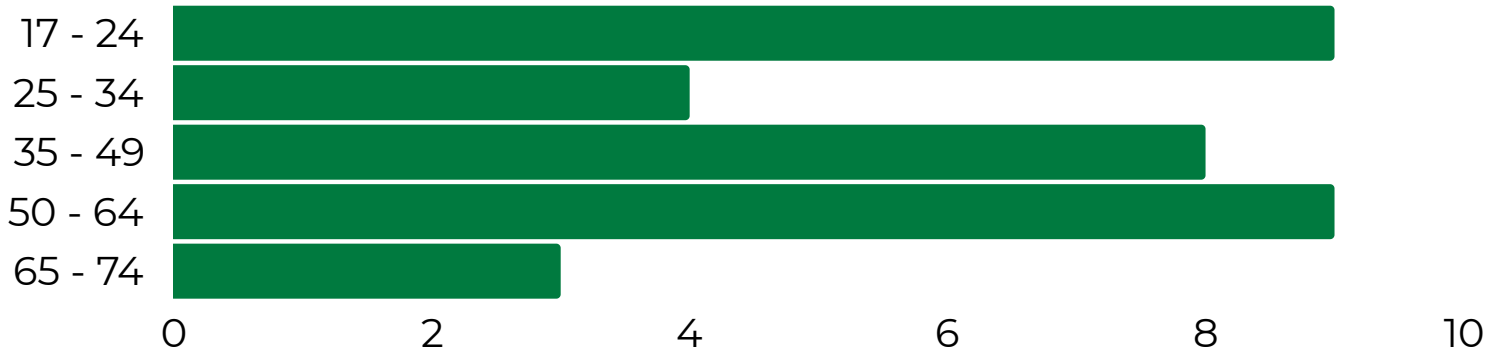


Recruitment



As of December 2025, we currently have 33 panel members.

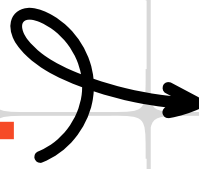
Since the last quarter, we have recruited 1 new member.



Statistics show that, both within Bedfordshire and nationally, Black and minority ethnic people are disproportionately more likely to be stopped and searched. It is therefore essential that stop and search and use of force are continuously monitored to ensure these police powers are exercised fairly and without discrimination.

To achieve this, we need a diverse panel that reflects a range of ethnic backgrounds and age groups. This representation is crucial to ensure that police powers, such as stop and search and use of force, are applied appropriately and effectively.

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!



Bedfordshire Stop and Search and Use of Force Scrutiny Panel



Can you spare some time for your community?

WHO ARE WE?

- We are an independent panel formed to consider the way that Bedfordshire Police use stop and search, to ensure it is being used appropriately.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

- We aim to ensure accountability, through openness and transparency with the police service, provide learning and increase public confidence in the police.

WHAT DO WE DO?

- We assess individual cases to identify areas of concern and good practice using a RAG (red, amber, green) traffic light system.

Interested in joining us or would you like to find out more information?

Contact us: PCC@beds.police.uk

