



Bedfordshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner



Bedfordshire Stop and Search and Use of Force Scrutiny Panel

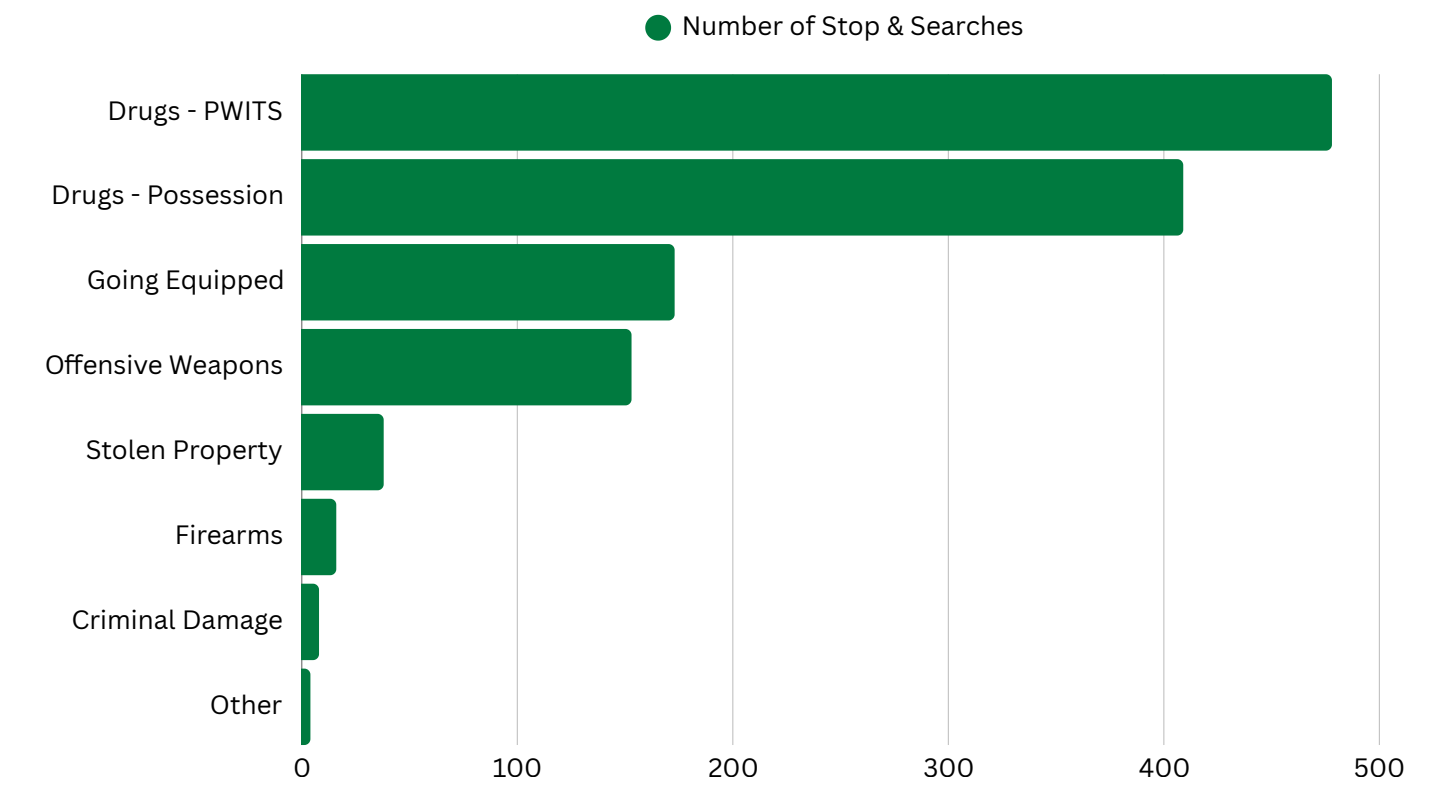
March 2026 -
Quarterly Bulletin

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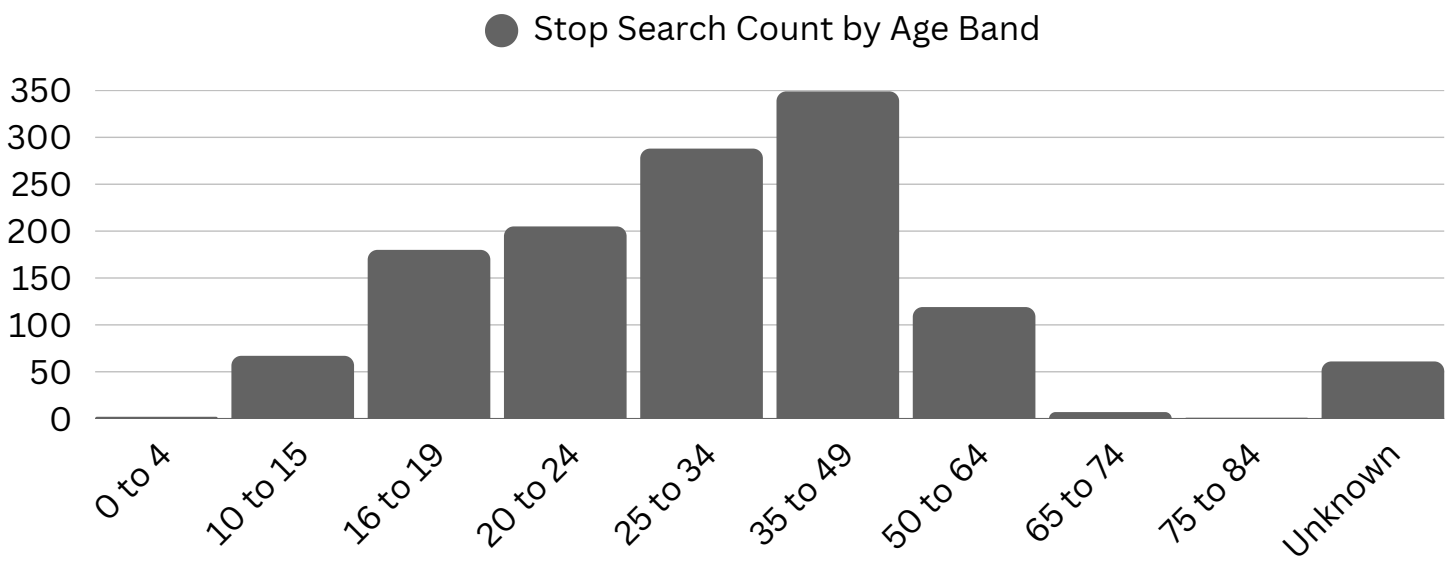


Stop & Search Data

Between January and March 2026, a total of 1,279 stop and searches were carried out. Here is a summary of the reasons for stop and searches conducted during this quarter. The largest proportion was associated with drug-related offenses, especially possession with intent to supply. This was followed by cases of drug possession and individuals being equipped for unlawful purposes.



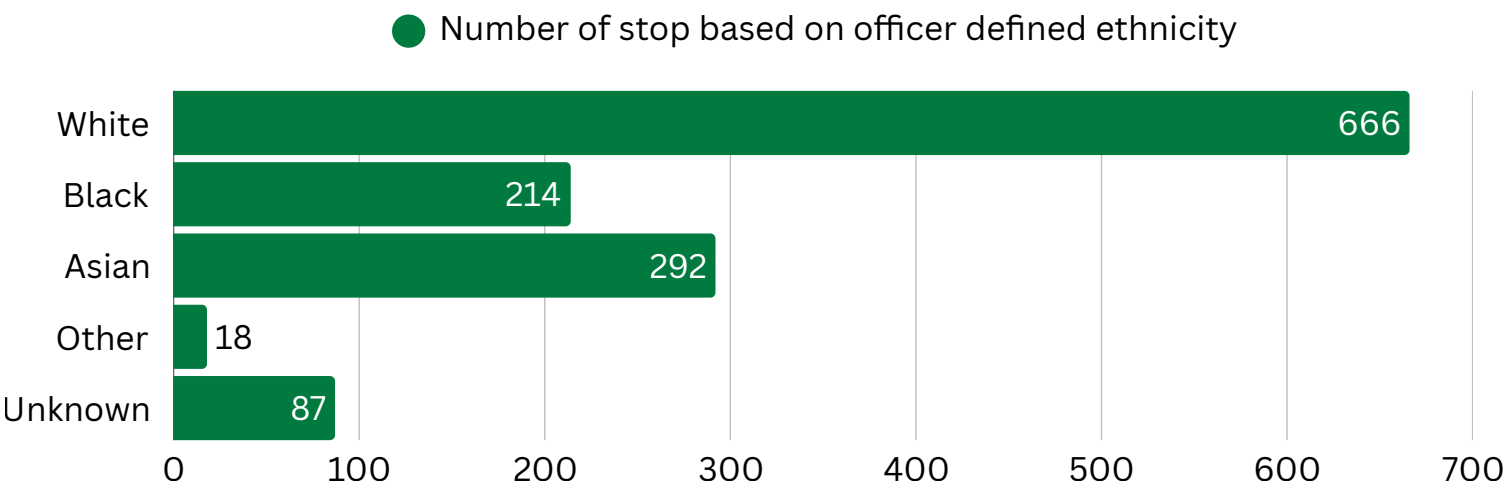
As a result of the searches, 48 weapons and 317 drugs were seized.



Stop & Search Data

The graph on the last page shows the distribution of stop and searches by age group. In the previous quarter, individuals aged 35–49 represented the largest proportion, with 349 recorded stops, while those aged 75–84 had the fewest, with only 1 stop. Additionally, 61 stops were recorded where the age was unknown.

Below is a summary of stop and searches by officer-defined ethnicity for the period January to March 2026. The majority of stops involved individuals identified as White (666), followed by Asian (292), Black (214), and Other ethnicities (18). There were also 87 stops where ethnicity was recorded as unknown.



Use of Force Data

2560

During Q4 (January to March), the number of use of force records increased to 2,560, of which 1,633 were unique incidents.

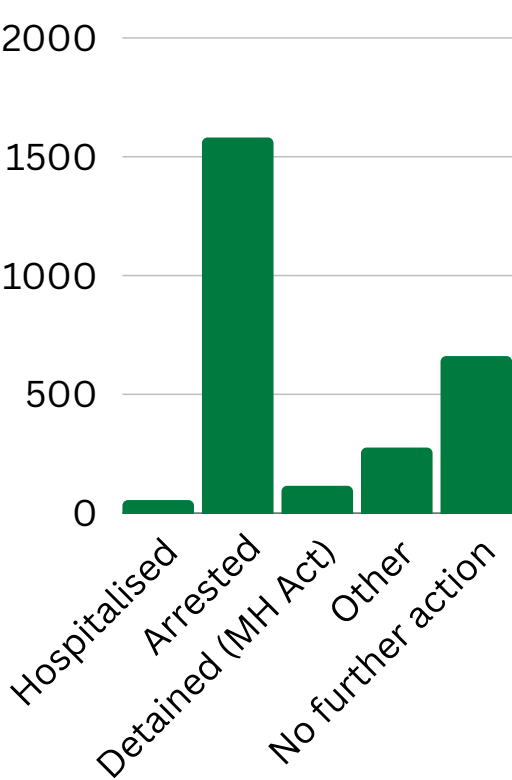
60.7% of all Use of Force incidents resulted in an arrest, representing a slight decrease from 64.4% in the previous quarter.

60.7%

The table below shows the proportionality rates for Q4. This quarter, there has been an 8.% increase in subjects perceived as Black ethnicity.

Qtr. 4 25-26				
Perceived Ethnicity	Number of Use of Force	Population	Per 1,000 Population	Ratio
White	1573	507,517	2.31	1
Black	474	39,601	8.86	3.84
Asian	468	116,909	3.2	1.39
Mixed / Other	38	40,709	1.19	0.84
Unknown	47			
	2600	704,736		

*Unknown includes 1 labelled as mz



The panel has repeatedly raised concerns about the ‘Unknown’ category, where no subject information has been recorded. Records labelled as mz appear to reflect cases in which no subject details were captured. The force has now provided assurance that this issue has been rectified, with only one such record remaining in the current dataset. This area will continue to be monitored over the next couple of quarters to provide ongoing assurance that improvements are sustained.

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 Bedfordshire.

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



Green 2 and Green 3 both indicate the stop met legal and organisational requirements; Green 2 requires minimal feedback, while Green 3 highlights minor learning points for future consideration.

Feedback on Section 163 videos viewed:

The scrutiny panel identified several positive aspects across the four reviewed videos, including:

- Officers were professional throughout and provided clear explanations, particularly when engaging with subjects who had language barriers.
- The stop was handled promptly, and the subject was not detained for longer than necessary.

The panel noted that the following aspects of the Section 163 interaction could have been improved:

- Body-worn video (BWV) should have been activated earlier.
- No earpiece was used, which raised GDPR concerns as sensitive information could be overheard by members of the public.
- Although Section 59 was referenced, it was not explained. Members of the public may not understand this without clear clarification.
- Both the officer and the subject were standing on the roadway, which raised safety concerns.



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
- Individuals aged 16–19
- Injuries occurring within blue light vehicles (particularly ambulances)
- Officers with a high frequency of use of force
- Female officers
- Use of force justified by size, gender, or build
- Custody video footage
- Vulnerable adults

Stop and Search Quarter Focus

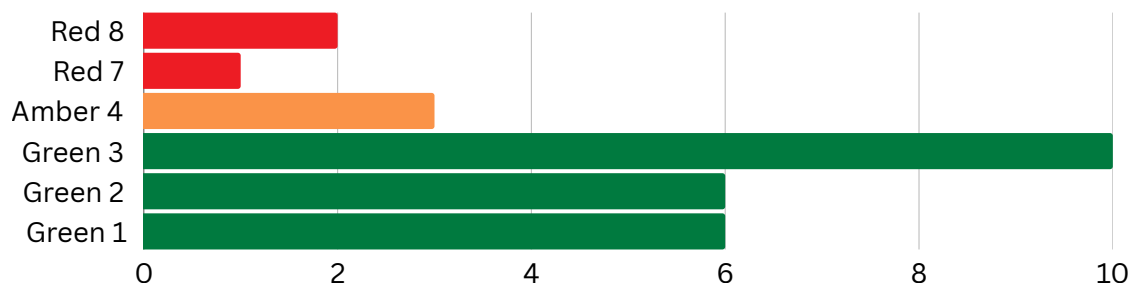
- Central Bedfordshire, due to higher levels of disproportionality
- Drug-related stops
- Black and Asian males
- Individuals aged 20–24
- Individuals aged 16–19
- Stops resulting in strip searches, particularly in Bedford due to the higher rate in that area
- Female subjects
- Vulnerable adults
- Individuals who are stopped and searched multiple times

What have we seen?

During this quarter, the panel reviewed a total of 28 video recordings, one more than in the previous quarter. These included:

- 14 Stop and Search videos
- 10 Use of Force videos
- 4 Section 163 (S163) videos

The scrutiny panel grades each video using a traffic-light system: Green, Amber, and Red. A Green grading indicates that the panel found the officer's conduct to be appropriate and in line with legal and organisational requirements. An Amber grading highlights areas for learning and development where improvement could be made. A Red grading indicates that the panel had significant concerns about the conduct observed. The table below shows the grading outcomes for all 28 videos reviewed. Of these, 22 were graded Green, three Amber, and three Red.



The red gradings highlight areas of concern raised by the panel. These will be referred to either PSD or a Superintendent for learning to be provided to the officer. Examples of feedback from panel members include:

- Concerns about the level of force used; panel members felt the officer appeared aggressive and that the situation could potentially have been handled differently.
- A lack of care shown towards the subject's wellbeing.
- Use of inappropriate and unprofessional language.
- Grounds provided to the subject did not match the written grounds. In addition, panel members felt the grounds suggested the subject was stopped and searched solely due to association, which they considered unlawful.

Organisational learning

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.

Lack of detail in Use of Force grounds

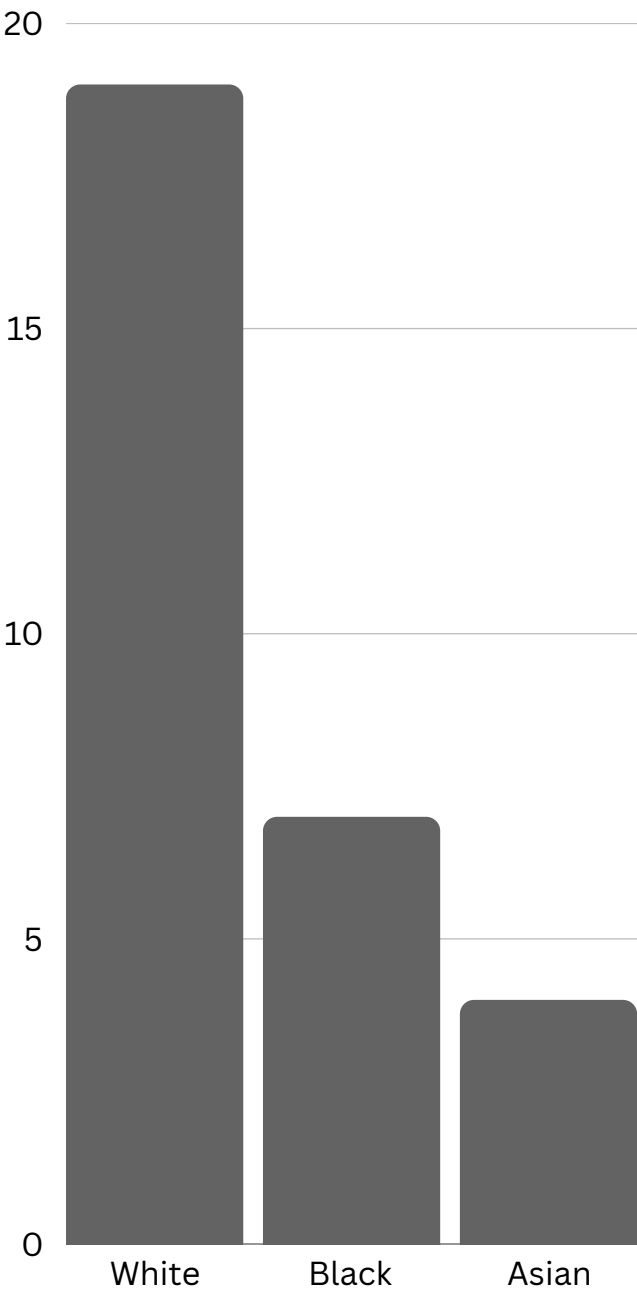
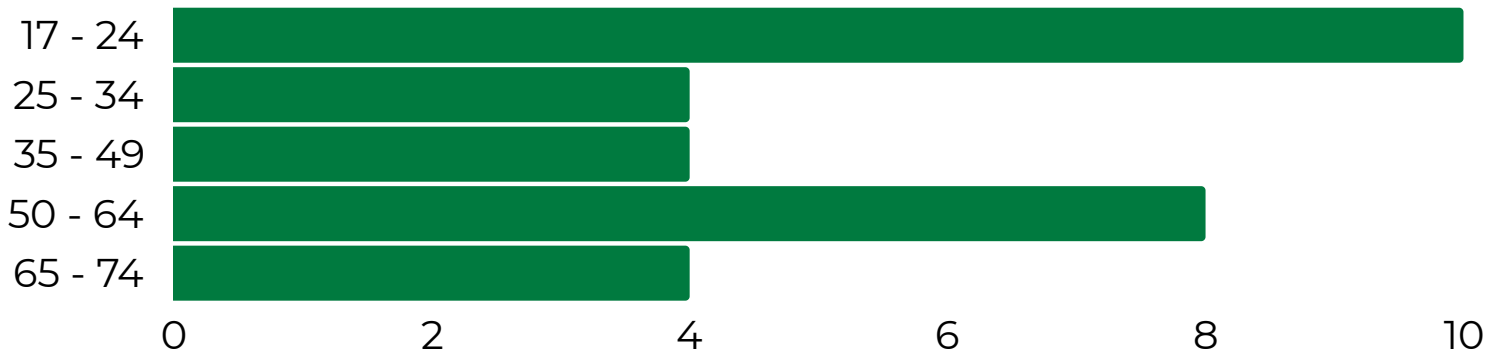
Panel members highlighted recurring concerns about the quality of information recorded on Use of Force forms. In particular, forms frequently did not include sufficient detail explaining why force was necessary or how the level of force used was justified in the circumstances. The panel has consistently provided feedback to officers to address these shortcomings. This feedback has emphasised the importance of clearly documenting decision-making and rationale to support transparency and accountability. The panel will continue to monitor the standard of Use of Force submissions to ensure improvements are made and maintained over time.

Recruitment



As of March 2026, we currently have 30 panel members.

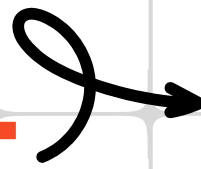
Since the last quarter, we have recruited 1 new member.



Statistics show that, both within Bedfordshire and nationally, Black and minority ethnic people are disproportionately more likely to be stopped and searched. For example, national Home Office data consistently shows that Black people are around four times more likely to be stopped and searched than White people. 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

