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# Bedfordshire Stop and Search and Use of Force Scrutiny Panel

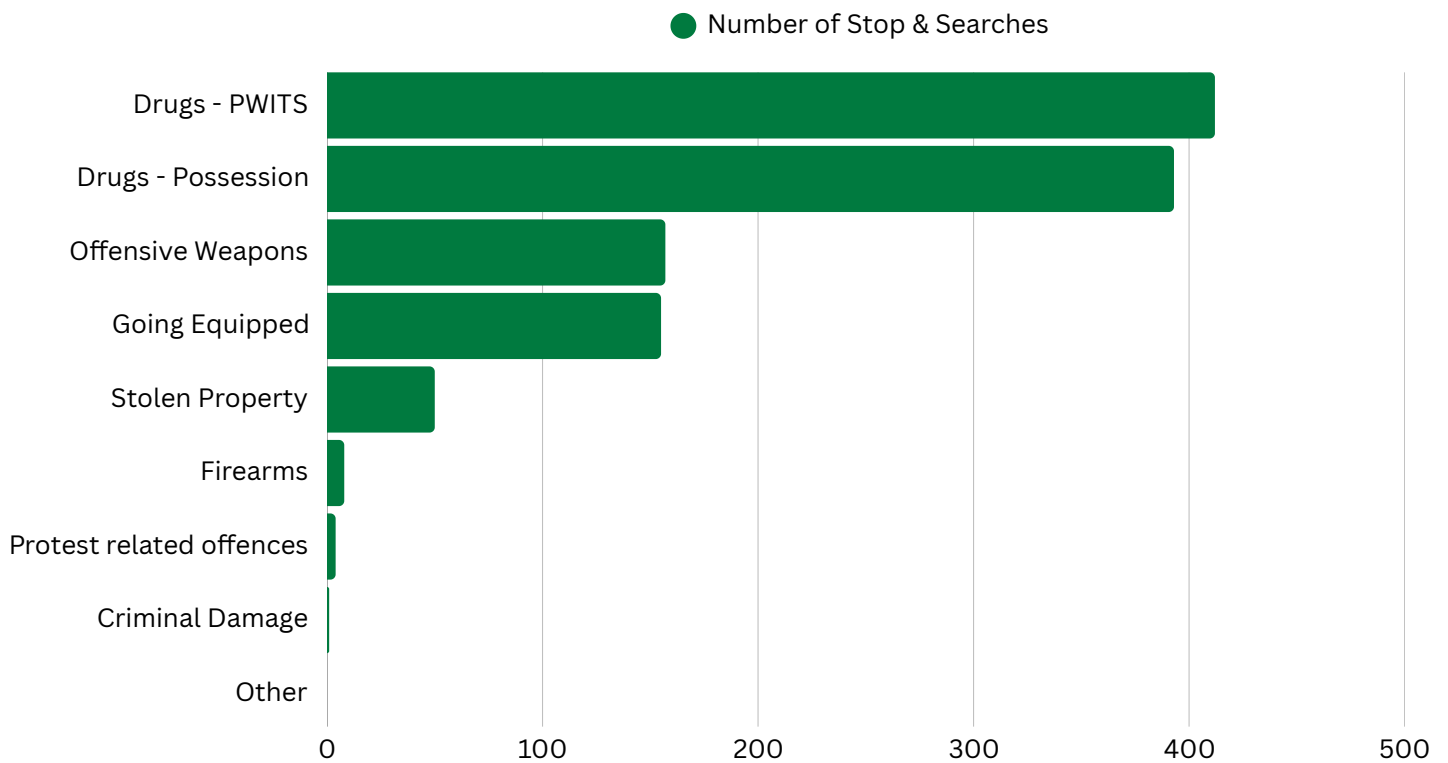
September 2025 -  
Quarterly Bulletin



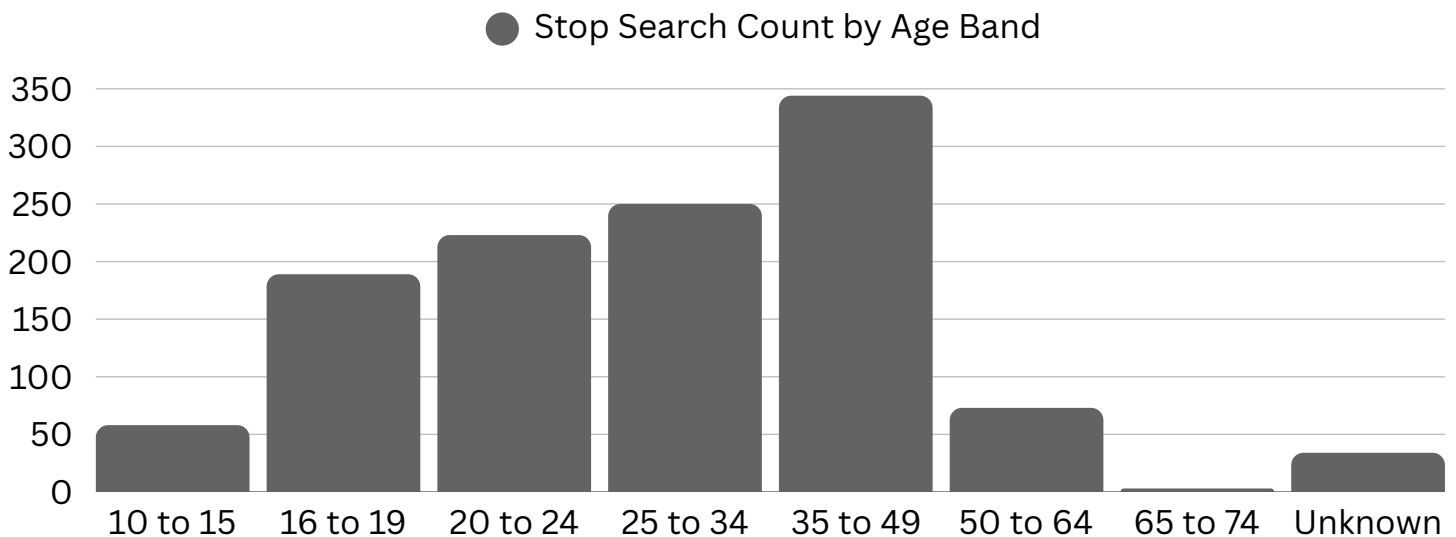
# Stop & Search Data

Between **July and September 2025**, a total of **1,180 stop and searches** were conducted. This is an increase of 96 compared to the previous quarter.

Below is a breakdown of the reasons for stop and searches conducted this quarter. A significant proportion were related to drug offences—particularly possession with intent to supply—followed by drug possession and offensive weapons.



Regarding the outcomes of the searches, 206 resulted in an arrest, 257 led to other forms of police action, and 717 concluded with no further action taken.

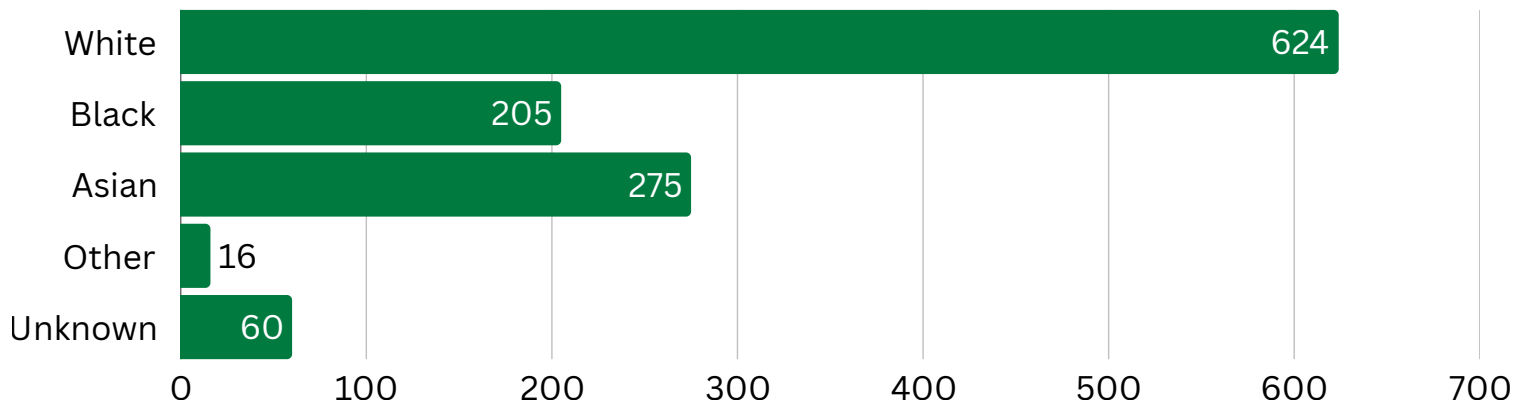


# Stop & Search Data

The graph above illustrates the number of stop and searches by age group. During the previous quarter, individuals aged 35 to 49 accounted for the highest number of stops (344), while the 65 to 74 age group had the fewest, with only 3 recorded stops. Additionally, 34 stops were recorded with an unknown age.

Below is a breakdown of stop and searches by officer-defined ethnicity for the period of July to September 2025. The highest number of stops were recorded for individuals identified as White (624), followed by Asian (275), Black (205), and Other ethnicities (16). Additionally, 60 stops were recorded with an unknown ethnicity.

● Number of stop based on officer defined ethnicity



For this quarter, the proportionality rates by ethnicity are as follows: officer-defined Asian background has a ratio of 1.8, while officer-defined Black background has a ratio of 2.8.



# Use of Force Data

# 2012

There were 2,012 Use of Force records in Q2 (July–September). This represents a 47% increase compared to the same period last year (1,372 records), which aligns with our force-wide initiative to improve recording accuracy, particularly for compliant handcuffing.

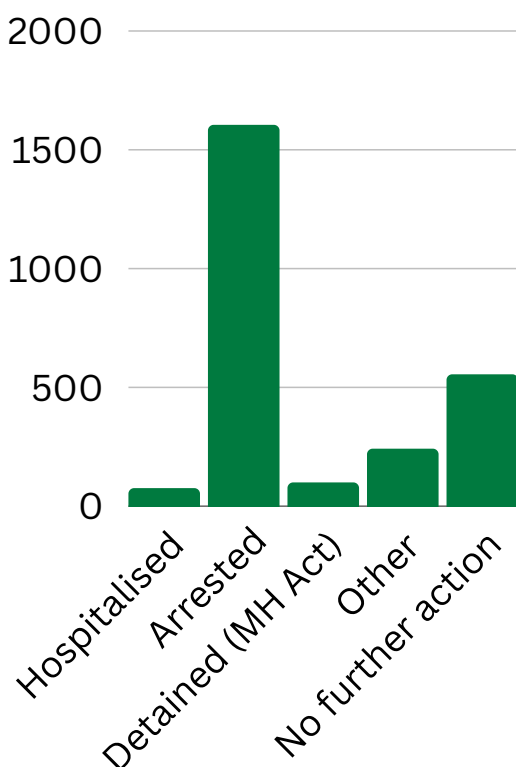
Handcuffing, whether cooperative or uncooperative, accounted for 1,531 of these records, representing 76% of all Use of Force incidents.

63.4% of all Use of Force incidents resulted in an arrest, compared to 63.1% during the same period last year.

# 63.4%

The table below shows the proportionality rates for Q2 2025, based on composite ethnicity, a measure that combines self-defined and officer-defined ethnicity.

Ethnicity	Number of Use of Force	Ratio
White	1416	1
Black	432	3.3
Asian	435	1.22
Mixed	118	1.2



The graph above shows the breakdown of Use of Force incidents this quarter by the subject's perceived ethnicity. 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.

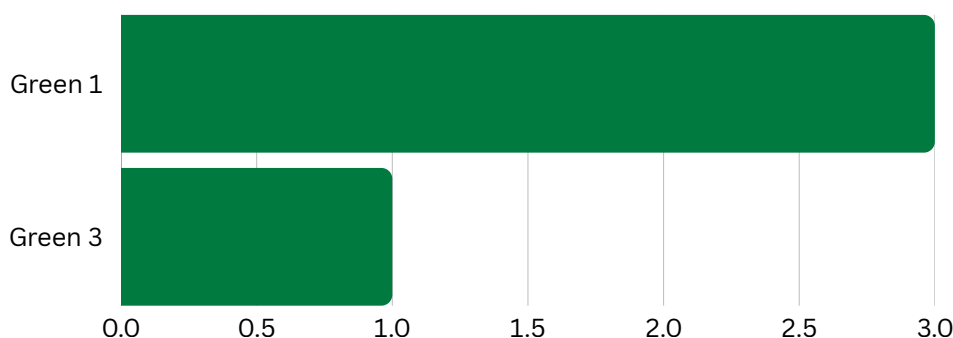
The chart to the left illustrates the outcomes of Use of Force incidents, with the majority resulting in the arrest of the subject.

# Section 163

## What have we seen this quarter?

This quarter, the panel reviewed and graded four Section 163 incidents. The footage featured male subjects, comprising two White individuals, one Asian individual, and one Black individual, 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 of the 4 videos that were reviewed. This included:

- Officers demonstrating clear and justifiable grounds for stopping vehicles
- Body-Worn Video (BWV) being activated promptly.
- Clear instructions were provided to the subject throughout the interaction.

The officer who received a Green 3 grading by the scrutiny panel was given feedback regarding the delivery of the legal caution, which was stated too quickly without ensuring the subject had the opportunity to understand it.

Organisational learning was also provided by the panel from this video, which is mentioned later in the bulletin.



# 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 aged 18-34
- Asian males aged 11-17
- Black females aged 11-17
- Female including trans women
- Reason being 'size, gender and build'
- Reason being 'prior knowledge'
- Other/improvised
- Taser involving Asian individuals
- Top searching officers

## Stop and Search Quarter Focus

- Luton Borough
- Stolen Property
- Firearms
- Self- defined ethnicity – Mixed individuals
- Officer defined ethnicity – Asian individuals in Luton
- Officer defined ethnicity – Black individuals in Bedford and Central Beds
- Top Searching officers
- Officer graded RED 7 at last main meeting

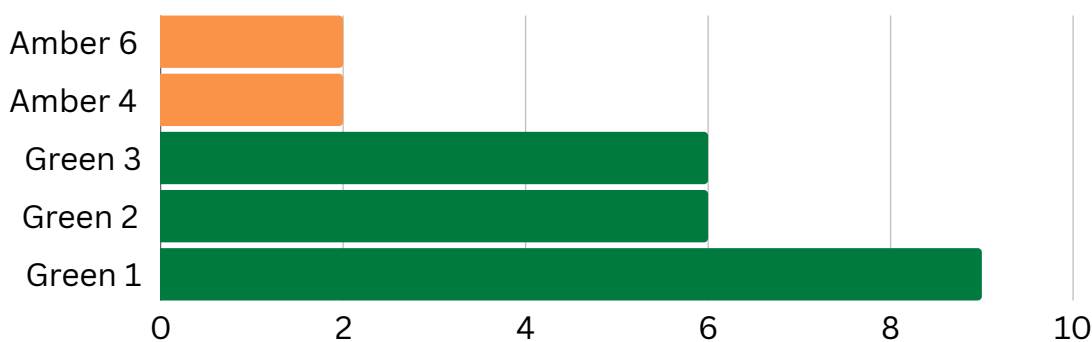
# What have we seen?

During this quarter, the panel reviewed a total of 25 video recordings, three more than in the previous quarter. These included:

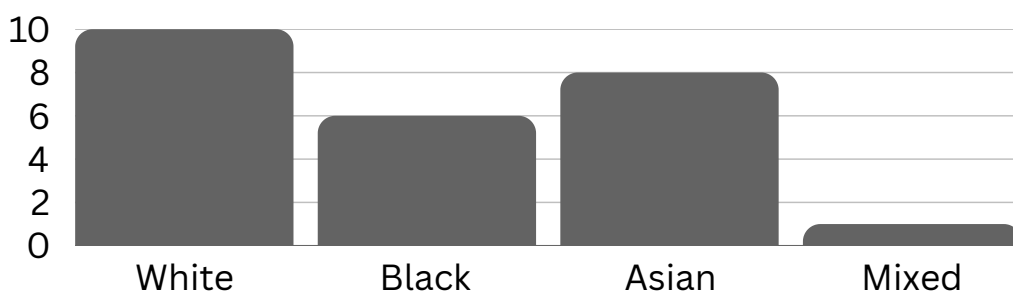
- 13 Stop and Search videos
- 8 Use of Force videos
- 4 Section 163 (S163) videos

The scrutiny panel grades each video using a traffic light system: Green, Amber, and Red. Green indicates the interaction was appropriate with little to no concerns, Amber highlights areas for learning and development, and Red signals significant concerns that require attention.

The table below shows the grading outcomes for all 25 videos reviewed. Of these, 21 videos that were graded as Green and 4 as Amber. The amber gradings reflected areas for improvement and learning, particularly around the use of language, maintaining better control in challenging situations, timely activation of Body-Worn Video (BWV), and the importance of prioritising de-escalation in future incidents.



The table below presents the videos reviewed, categorized by officer-defined ethnicity.



# Updates this Quarter

## New JPS Internal Scrutiny Panel

A newly established JPS internal scrutiny panel, formed in collaboration between Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, and Cambridgeshire forces. This panel conducts dip sampling and assessments of use of force incidents, with each force reviewing cases from one of the others. This aims to improve transparency.

## Supervisor Dip Sampling

A new requirement for supervisory oversight has been introduced, mandating supervisors to dip sample at least one BWV per officer per month to ensure appropriate use of force.

## Subject Matter Expert Reviews

Additionally, subject matter experts, such as officer safety trainers, are now required to independently review BWV footage involving higher-level force tactics (e.g., baton strikes, taser, PAVA). This is part of a cross-force agreement between Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Essex, allowing experts to review footage from other forces.

## Stop and Search Panel review JPS videos

The Independent Scrutiny Panel has been asked to review one Body-Worn Video (BWV) recording per quarter from the JPS Taser, Firearms, and Dogs unit. This request has been extended to all three Independent Stop and Search Panels across Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, and Bedfordshire. The panels will now take this into account when selecting footage for quarterly review.

## Changes to video selection process

Following extensive discussions with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the panel, a decision has been made to enhance the process for selecting videos to be reviewed each quarter. Beginning in October, a dedicated meeting will be held at the start of each quarter, focused solely on selecting videos aligned with the priorities identified at the Data Panel. This change is intended to streamline the process, improve time efficiency, and ultimately allow for the review of a greater number of videos.

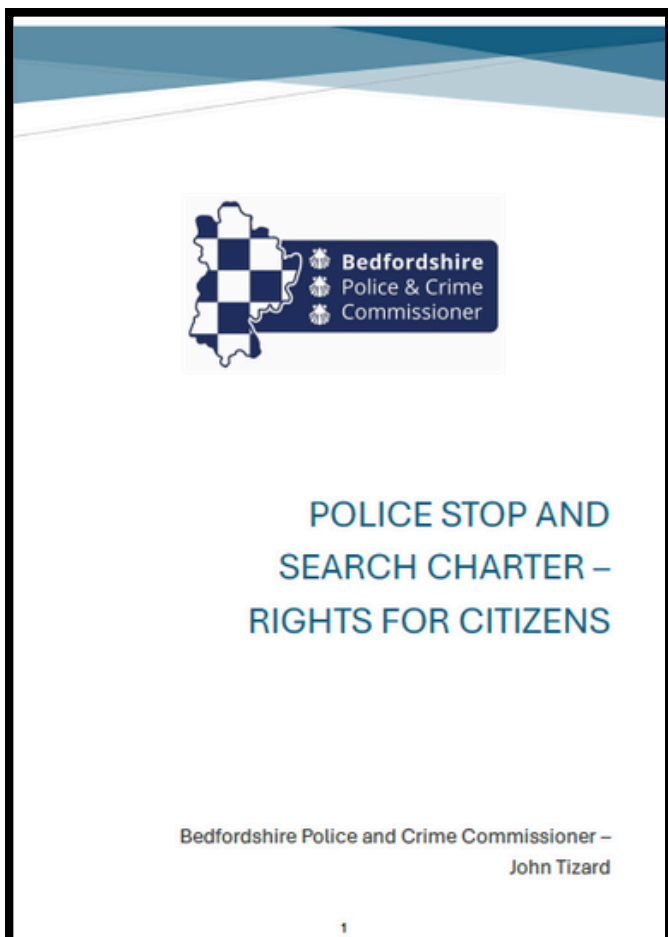
# The Launch of the Stop and Search Charter

Police and Crime Commissioner, John Tizard, has launched a new Stop and Search Charter to strengthen public trust in policing and ensure the fair, proportionate and precise use of police powers.

The charter sets out the rights of citizens, how and when police powers should be applied, the oversight processes in place, and how to raise concerns if anyone feels those powers have been used inappropriately.

The launch follows discussion with the Stop and Search Panel. The PCC is determined to lead by example and ensure that Stop and Search, along with Use of Force powers, are deployed appropriately, without discrimination, and with full transparency.

The initiative builds on national best practice, but is tailored to reflect the needs, concerns, and priorities of Bedfordshire communities.



[Click here to view the full press release announcing the launch of the Stop and Search Panel.](#)

[Click here to view the Stop and Search Charter.](#)

# Organisational learning

## Learning identified within data collection

The Data Panel this quarter raised concerns regarding the Stop and Search and Use of Force data, specifically the frequent use of the 'unknown' category for officer-defined ethnicity. The panel noted that reliance on this category undermines their confidence in the accuracy and reliability of the data provided. This has since been investigated by the force to ascertain whether it is a system issue or a recording issue. The number of these entries has now decreased.

## Training to enhance officers' ability to interact appropriately with individuals with disabilities.

After reviewing a stop and search involving a person with hearing disabilities, the panel concluded that officers would benefit from additional training on how to effectively communicate with members of the public who have hearing impairments. They also suggested that more resources should be made available to support officers in these situations.

## Learning highlighted the importance of enhanced collaboration between police and other relevant agencies.

Following the review of two Use of Force incidents, panel members identified key areas for improvement in multi-agency support and collaboration.

In the first case, concerns were raised about the lack of hospital support for attending officers during a mental health-related incident. The panel concluded that the situation should have been managed by mental health professionals and recommended enhanced officer training and stronger collaboration between police and hospital staff.

In a separate incident involving the removal of an autistic, non-verbal child from a property, the panel acknowledged that officers acted appropriately but felt they were let down by social services. This footage was escalated to senior leadership to prompt a multi-agency discussion.

Across both cases, the panel emphasised the need for improved inter-agency working and clearer escalation pathways to ensure more effective responses in future incidents. These concerns have been raised with the force leads for action and updates.

# Recruitment



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

Since the last quarter, we have recruited 7 new members.

Currently, 27% of our panel members are from the youth demographic, reflecting the success of our recent recruitment push. Prior to this campaign, youth representation stood at just 7%, meaning we have achieved a 20% increase. This improvement aligns with the PCC's commitment outlined in the Police and Crime Plan to ensure greater youth involvement in scrutiny processes.



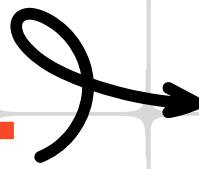
Our newest panel member shared his feedback after attending a recent Stop and Search session, stating:

*“Such a diverse mix of views and opinions from all backgrounds present. This might be the most diverse and fair group I have seen, and the fact it acts as a panel is really encouraging!”*

It is vital that our panel remains diverse and representative of a range of ethnic backgrounds and age groups. This ensures that police powers are scrutinised appropriately and that community perspectives are reflected in the review process.



# 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](mailto:PCC@beds.police.uk)

