



# STOP & SEARCH DISPROPORTIONALITY IN DORSET POLICE AND OUR RESPONSE

## 1. Introduction

Dorset Police takes legitimacy and the way it uses its powers seriously and recognises the impact it can have on the community and more specifically those from a black or minority ethnic group. Dorset Police strongly opposes anything which discriminates against individuals or groups based on ethnicity or perceived ethnicity. The fact that Dorset has been a national outlier for disproportionality has eroded some of that trust and we must understand the reasons for this and develop strong relationships with the people of Dorset in order to explain that disproportionality, listen to concerns and act upon them. We have welcomed the opportunity to take a reflective look at our position and engage external respected organisations to take an independent view on the data. We recognise that this is an extremely complex area and to be seen as a legitimate police service we need to go beyond just explaining the disproportionality, and develop long deep rooted relationships to help drive down crime and inequality and become an organisation which reflects the community it serves. This document outlines the ongoing work by Dorset Police around disproportionality over the last year and makes recommendations for the Chief Constable and PCC on next steps.

## 2. Context of the issue

Stop and Search has been a tactic employed by Dorset Police in its approach to reducing harm, crime and the risk that our communities face. We have over many years responded to national guidance and best practice, in particular the introduction of Best Use of Stop Search (BUSS) announced by the Home Secretary in 2014. Since 2012 the tactic has been deployed on a daily basis however its use has reduced significantly as we have professionalised our approach and introduced BUSS.

Year	Searches	White	Black	Rate
2012/13	8271	7312	372	11:1
2013/14	8513	7501	495	15:1
2014/15	7917	6296	361	13:1
2015/16	Gap	Gap	Gap	Gap
2016/17	3244	2497	243	22:1
2017/18	2399	1881	142	16:8
2018/19	2368	1684	197	25:1
2019/20	2105	1516	153	22.5:1

NB – Gap in 2015/16 is due to introduction of NICHE system and transition

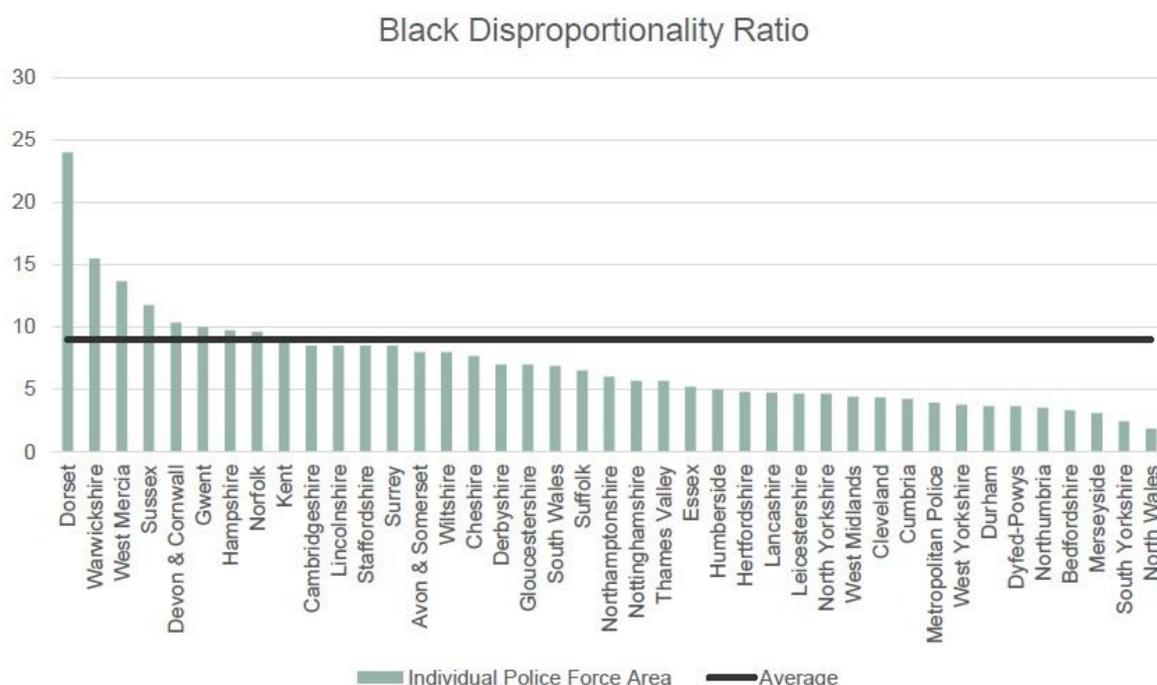
The issue of Dorset being an outlier for disproportionality in Stop and Search has been noted over a number of years and as can be seen from the above table, as the use of the tactic decreased the disproportionality ratio has increased. The numbers in this are measured nationally against the 2011 census which suggests that there are 744,041 residents in Dorset of which 0.5% are black and 4% are BAME. Dorset Police has for a number of years flagged that this does not feel representative of our diverse communities, in particular within the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole conurbation area.

In 2018 Dorset Police took part in an OPCC commissioned review of Stop Search which was undertaken by an ex Dorset Police Officer who had also worked with the College of Policing on the national stop search position. Although this was a useful exercise, the force recognised that the recommendations

would assist with better governance and scrutiny of working practices but would not impact on disproportionality. The recommendations were taken into the tactical group for delivery over the force. The review did however flag some focus group responses which could indicate some underlying unconscious bias which required a response. This will be dealt with later in the document.

Dorset is noted as an outlier for imported criminality in particular ‘County Lines’. The National County Lines Coordination Centre have mapped out the flow of importing and exporting county lines which provides detail indicating that Dorset is uniquely affected by the exportation from London based gangs. Other rural forces are largely affected by gangs emanating from Liverpool which feature membership that is predominantly white.

With this context, Dorset remains as the outlier for disproportionality which can be seen from the following table. PCC Martyn Underhill formally wrote to the Chief Constable asking the force to account for the problem.



### 3. Response to the issue from Dorset Police

In response to the challenge and to develop a strategic approach to the problem, CC Vaughan made it an issue that the whole executive would work jointly on to resolve. The Deputy Chief Constable was appointed the chair of a disproportionality board which would be tasked in managing and governing the issue. This was initially a bi-monthly meeting to get work progressed moving to quarterly. Including the first board in June 2020, there have been 5 meetings with the last being 6<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

Under this a thematic lead was created chaired at Chief Superintendent level. This coordinated activity and response around a number of key areas including:

- Operational response
- Training
- Bias
- Community Scrutiny
- Developing the evidence base

All of these are managed by Superintendent or police staff equivalent leads. What was clear from the outset is that the issue needed some forensic understanding before any decisions were made on next steps. It was also seen as key that we should be transparent with our data and utilise the help of academia and consultancy to independently review what the data told us and try to have a deeper understanding of what we should do. One concern flagged that some of the issues could be driven through unconscious bias at senior levels while making policy decisions. An example of this was the inclusion of county lines by the previous PCC in the Police and Crime Plan 2019 refresh and force decision over the establishment of a county lines team which would focus on the harm it caused. Dorset being an outlier targeted by London groups would pose a risk of increased activity around stop search and potentially increased disproportionality. The Executive felt it needed to better understand bias and also be able to identify and explain where spikes occur in operational activity and be able to account for them. This report will now take us through each element and the response.

#### **4. Unconscious Bias**

It is worth recognising early that the topic of Unconscious Bias has seen much conversation nationally and by ministers over the last year. Dorset Police had already started its activity ahead of these conversations and recognise it is important that in any of our work we have mechanism to identify, understand and respond to any bias that might cause people or groups to be treated unfairly.

In the last HMICFRS PEEL assessment, it was recognised that Dorset Police had undertaken unconscious bias training which was well developed. During operational reality testing, officers couldn't recall the training in detail and it was recommended that we undertake further work to ensure officers were aware of unconscious bias and the impact it can have. From this point a new and ongoing training package was developed which had independent academic scrutiny to ensure fit for purpose. Alongside this, all forcewide training (for example vulnerability phase 2) is now having bias training built in to ensure a consistent approach with staff. This is reviewed by the Legitimacy manager from Corporate Development to ensure it delivers up to date messages.

Alongside this the force approach Dr Peter Jones who was starting some research on unconscious bias in policing. It was agreed that testing would be undertaken on 3 particular cohorts to see if we could identify bias that needed to be managed:

- High yield users of Stop search
- All leadership Chief Inspector and above (including OPCC)
- New recruits testing before starting, during training and when operational

The high yield users were tested first and although there was a limited response, which we now know was a technology issue with the videos rather than people not getting involved, no bias was identified that would impact black or minority groups. The leadership function results indicated the same, in fact it was suggested that there was a stronger response in favour of black or minority groups rather than being against. The student officers are currently still in testing and we anticipate the results at the end of the year.

Dorset Police recognise that the way we train and develop staff is key to ensuring no particular groups are impacted in an adverse way. We are leading with training innovation introducing VR headsets to train in a range of scenarios. Through this, we also have a programme being developed which will indicate if our staff develop a bias to a certain activity or group from the way the technology is managed. We anticipate this to be going live in 2021 and have a preferred provider selected who is developing the software. The training plan and approach is also being taken to the next Independent Advisory Group to ask how the community can feed back and develop our work.

## 5. Data

In multiple forums the police have rightly been criticised for incomplete data around ethnicity. This is where officers have not recorded the self-defined ethnicity or the perceived ethnicity, and as such assumptions have understandably been made suggesting that the stop searches missing ethnicity would be people from black or minority ethnic groups. This concern was raised in select committees also and is reported each year by the ONS.

The national picture as last reported in November 2020 suggested that the gaps in data had increased by 76% from 53,000 cases to 93,282, albeit the majority of these were in the Metropolitan Police Service. Dorset had 345 searches without ethnicity recorded which amounted to 16.3% of its records. This was inline with the national average but clearly needed resolving.

A Chief Inspector was appointed and through the use of the record management system, an automated report was created indicating when a search had been input without ethnicity. This was passed to local supervisors so that the officer could update the record and they were then debriefed to understand why it was missed outlining the importance of the issue. Since then, Dorset has now moved to over 99.5% compliance in this area and we know the vast majority of the under recorded searches were actually for white individuals and the impact was to assist in lowering the overall disproportionality rate. More importantly the frequency of records missing the data is reducing meaning we are influencing the culture of our officers. Moving forward, the new stop search records which will be completed on mobile devices cannot be completed until the ethnicity is recorded as a mandated field and go live with PRONTO in July and August 2021.

## 6. Operational approach

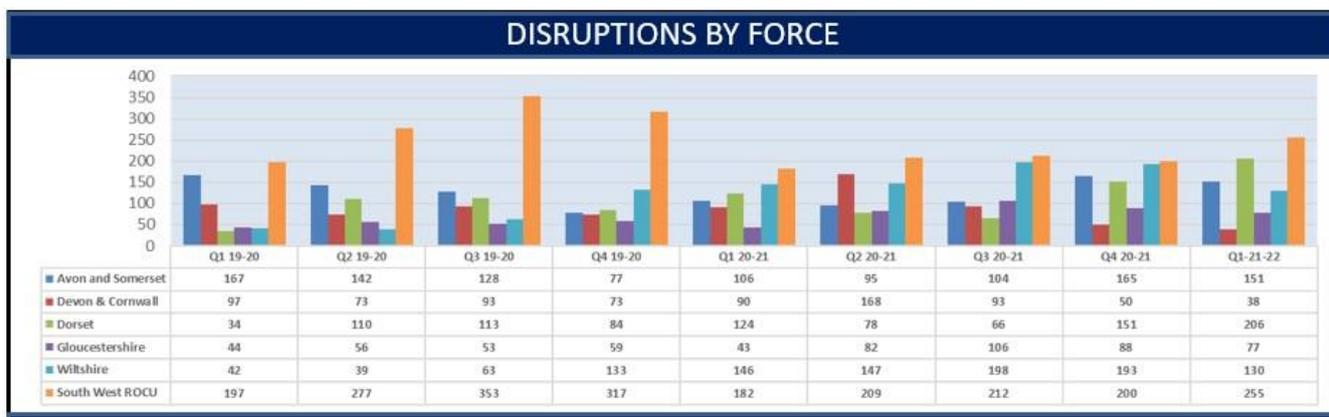
The operational group is chaired by the tactical lead (superintendent) and has representation from managers in all operational departments with support from Corporate Development and the BAME network. This group is responsible for monitoring operational performance, developing responses to emerging issues and delivering recommendations. This group has monitored and managed the OPCC independent report and those themes from the Disproportionality board. The following describe some of the key areas it has focused and delivered over the last 12 months:

- Officers who feature in the top searchers with low find rates. The group identify key themes and ensure that those officers searches are reviewed for context and grounds. Officers are spoken to in a supportive way to ensure they had considered alternatives to stop search.
- Officers who have high find rates – to look at best practice but also ensure searches are inline with force priorities and linked to harm.
- Repeat subjects of searches – those individuals who are repeatedly searched have appropriate review and ensure they are being focused upon lawfully, ethically and that no other tactic would provide a better outcome. One example was a high harm offender searched multiple times for weapons with no outcome. Through this intervention a Criminal Behaviour Order was seen as a better approach, which was issued and has resulted in safeguarding of vulnerable women.
- Repeat search locations – where certain locations have high levels of search activity, a review is undertaken to ensure intelligence or calls for service are not disproportionately leading to stop search rather than another approach, such as hot spot policing.

The group have developed these responses and the outcomes already been noted. The top searching officers and teams are changing on a regular basis. This is not only due to the intervention but as we

professionalise the use of the tactic we are seeing support functions, such as firearms teams, becoming top searchers at times due to being deployed on operations with a specific threat. It is worth noting that there have been some recommendations to the group that have not been progressed, such as traffic light systems, quotas and moving of high searching officers as they would not be ethical or lawful based on what has been seen to date.

Earlier, we discussed that Dorset is impacted by County Lines in a unique way leading to operational activity. Organised Crime Groups (OCG) are mapped and managed by the Intelligence Directorate supported by the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU). The operational response to an OCG is known as a 'disruption' which could be a number of tactics including stop search. Dorset has now consistently seen an increase in threat from OCGs and the force has undertaken outstanding work in responding and disrupting the groups. The following chart demonstrates the level of activity and shows Dorset now undertakes more disruptions than any other force in the South West and almost as many as the ROCU. Although is a good reflection of the capability of the force but also reflects the threat which is managed.



What is important to note is that although the risk and disruptions have increased, the use of Stop and Search has not in the same way, demonstrating the tactic is well thought through and the intervention of the tactical group is having the desired effect.

## 7. Disproportionality Performance 2020-21

Throughout the year of 2020-21, the force has closely monitored the impact of its intervention and in the first 3 quarters it saw a noticeable decrease in disproportionality as follows:

**Quarter 1 = 1 : 18.6 (45 black searches)**

**Quarter 2 = 1 : 16.2 (32 black searches)**

**Quarter 3 = 1 : 14.9 (34 black searches)**

Quarter 4 however saw a spike where it moved to 1:23.1 which triggered a review of all cases. We know that the increase over this period linked to 2 high harm operations, both county lines, where weapons and violence had been used. The number of black searches increased to 57 during that 3 month period, due to those operations however the find rate for those operations was 66% against a national average of 20%. In fact, the find rates for the whole year were 28.9% which shows the use of searching is more effective in Dorset than nationally.

One of the key issues from this performance is that most black searches were on individuals who were from out of county and not resident population as per census. We have found some significant anomalies in data over recent years, for example in 2019/20 Purbeck section having a disproportionality of 1:47.4, the highest in the force however attributed to just 2 black stop searches for the whole year. This has raised significant concern that with an outdated census and the wider impact of travelling criminality the force would consistently have trouble keeping the number down.

## 8. Consultancy support to give an independent view

In 2020 Dorset Police were approached and offered consultancy to look at stop search and see if they could identify the root cause of the disproportionality figures and if we could map our communities in a more up to date way to better understand the impact the tactic was having. We recognised that such dramatic disproportionality numbers as the Purbeck issue and suggestion a diverse community like Dorset only had 0.5% black population meant the data couldn't be trusted and this was having a negative impact on our local communities. Frazer Nash was asked to find a more up to date population picture and also look at the impact of County Lines/travelling individuals against the use of the tactic on the resident population.

They obtained a P2 dataset from Beacon Dodsworth who used the 2011 census but refreshed it each year to give a much more accurate picture of the local community. What they found is as expected, Dorset had seen a significant change in its diversity as shown in the following table –

	Total Population	White %	Black %	Other %
2011 Census	744,041	96	0.5	3.5
P2	766,045	92	1.3	6.7

Utilising the data we were able to get a more accurate reflection of what disproportionality would look like compared to the 2011 figures. This showed a significant drop from 1:22.5 down to 8.04 –

	Values calculated using 2011 Census data taken from [2]	Values calculated using the P2 demographic data
Black stop and search rate per 1,000 people	48.0	19.4
White stop and search rate per 1,000 people	2.13	2.41
Black disproportionality ratio	22.5	8.04

Although a reduction this is still a figure of concern. What it does not allow for is that the majority of black searches were not on the resident population, which the census only records. Frazer Nash found that 20% of all searches in 2019/20 were from people who did not live in Dorset, but of that 20%, they found 61% were black and from mainly London. By taking out the non-resident searches we found that the disproportionality figure dropped to 3.4.

It is recognised that there will be limitations to the data. The P2 dataset like the census may have under recorded the actual population and makeup of it and this approach is only reflective of Dorset, other areas may also have changed to the same or a greater extent. What we can do though is now speak with some confidence that we understand the issue of disproportionality in forensic detail and can now have an open conversation with our communities on what we have found. The full Frazer Nash report can be found attached to this report.

## 9. Research with Cambridge University and Cambridge Centre for Evidence Based Policing

Alongside the work of Frazer Nash we also commissioned Professor Lawrence Sherman from Cambridge University to undertake some research on stop search. This was not to look at the issues of the census like Frazer Nash, but to look for opportunity to use the tactic in a more evidence based way against harm. The following research question was developed:

*How does police use of stop and search in Dorset vary between White and non-White residents in relation to serious violent crimes committed against members of both racial groups, across local areas, over a recent five-year period, and how might these data be used to reconsider practices in relation to serious violent crime counts in each local area?*

Cambridge found that Dorset Police don't use stop search in every area of the force and it is more focused around the larger conurbation areas as one might expect. Compared to national averages, Dorset uses stop search far less often than other forces. Cambridge also identified that 3 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) featured in the national hot spot list (more than 217 violent crimes/year) and a more focused use of the tactic could help reduce violence but also assist in reducing overall disparity.

Alongside this work Cambridge also published a concept for a new way to look at the relationship between stop search and race disparity with the Race Adjusted Disparity (RAD) index which can be found attached to this document. This looked at the correlation between victimisations, offending and police powers looking to achieve equal protection from unequal risk, measuring racial balance of preventative policing calculated by the index.

The research has developed to a proposed Randomised Control Trial (RCT), where we deploy resources in key hotspots to use stop search and other preventative measures at key times in the most violent LSOAs to see if this will help reduce harm and disparity. The use of the tactic more broadly would not be stopped, however would be more focused on priorities. The operational lead for the RCT is currently finalising the research methodology which will be available shortly, however the research by Cambridge can be found attached to this document.

## **10. Scrutiny**

Scrutiny of the issue comes from a number of areas in the force. Dorset Police monitors complaints from the public through strategic boards however they have been consistently low around the use of stop search and disproportionality. The HMICFRS have undertaken reviews of searches and through this found 94% had reasonable grounds. The Chief Constable also undertook a personal audit to ensure that searches were lawful and proportionate with conclusive evidence of compliance. Alongside this Dorset actively participated in the Prime Ministers Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities sharing our data and work.

One issue the force has accepted is external scrutiny which is reflective of the community is not where it should be. This has previously been managed by Dorset Police until 2016 when it was adopted by the OPCC. The OPCC introduced regular and structured meetings which were published on its website, however issues around diverse representation on the panel still continued.

Accepting the independent scrutiny panel is not owned by Dorset Police, we have moved forward to form an Independent Advisory Group which is now meeting bimonthly. This is made up of local community representatives who have actively raised concern over stop search with the police. Most were identified through our protest liaison at recent Black Lives Matter meetings but also include individuals who have proactively engaged the force.

To date, the group have met and raised community concerns and also started to discuss our operational response. We are sharing our stop search data with them and have had representatives from the Home Office also observe who gave very positive feedback. The group have asked that they have the opportunity to meet senior officers and HMICFRS to better understand all we are doing (being facilitated in August meeting) and from this want to support scrutiny and advice of next steps in particular around policy and how we measure legitimacy. As an example, the proposed RCT with Cambridge will be taken to the group for discussion alongside training. We are also supporting one member with access to data, interviews and questionnaire to staff for a thesis they are undertaking

on stop search in Dorset and the young people from Black Lives Matter are organising a questionnaire for the community which they will let us have to consider what the concerns are.

This group feels like a turning point in our engagement around disproportionality and the force is rightly proud of the work. It should be noted this group is not the same as a scrutiny panel, and we will still work with the OPCC to undertake that function moving forward.

## **11. Conclusion and next steps**

This document outlines significant progress that has been made by the force over the last year. Disproportionality is an issue that needs to be better understood nationally. Engagement with the NPCC lead and Home Office has shown we are taking the conversation to a different place and starting to deliver a more detailed approach and understanding.

There is however much more to be done and the following recommendations are made:

- All work including this document are openly published soonest.
- The current operational and training activity is progressed and updated via disproportionality board.
- HMICFRS are briefed on work in detail.
- OPCC review the independent scrutiny panel for better representation – Dorset Police IAG will likely be able to assist.
- The Frazer Nash report is developed with the NPCC lead so we can see if other forces face similar issues and how unique this could be to Dorset. This should be subsequently published.
- Dorset Police develop and deliver a Randomised Control Trial on Stop search to see if we can better focus it on serious harm.