

Stop and search education and advocacy for young people

Using education and advocacy to collaboratively address disproportionate use of stop and search on people from ethnic minority backgrounds, and the negative impact this has on public engagement with the police.

First published
9 January 2024

Updated
21 January 2026

Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Community engagement Criminal justice Diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI)
Organisation	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary
Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effie Blankson (Basingstoke Unites Against Racism) – bsk4blm@outlook.com • Scott Johnson (Hampshire Police) – scott.johnson@hampshire.police.uk • Katherine Stewart (Queen Mary's College) – katherine.stewart@qmc.ac.uk
Region	South East

Key details

Partners	Police Community safety partnership Education Local authority Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	March 2021
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Children and young people Communities Victims

Aim

The programme aims to create positive relationships between the police and local communities.

It does this by providing a supportive framework for any young person affected by stop and search.

This includes:

- using education and advocacy to engage the police and young communities surrounding the use of stop and search
- ensuring young people know what good practice surrounding stop and search looks like, what their rights are, and providing opportunities to discuss and ask questions around this
- ensuring young people have an advocate trained by local police, who they can speak to if they experience a negative stop and search encounter and who can help them to address this
- empowering young people and advocates to challenge police use of stop and search and ensure action is taken to address any associated issues or concerns

- increasing officers' understanding of how they can be perceived by young people and the negative impact that stop and search can have
- holding the police to account for their use of stop and search – providing a mechanism to ensure powers are appropriately used and reduce its disproportionate use on young people from ethnic minority backgrounds
- increasing the legitimacy of police in relation to their use of stop and search powers on young people

Intended outcome

- Young people being provided with education surrounding stop and search through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. This includes a module in the curriculum and an annual workshop held for students in year 10.
- Young people having increased knowledge about good practice in stop and search and their rights.
- More opportunities for young people to safely discuss stop and search.
- Having a trained advocate in each school involved in the initiative, who is available for students to speak to if they experience a negative stop and search encounter and who can help them to address this.
- Young people having confidence to raise questions about the use of stop and search.
- Action being taken by the police to address concerns or issues raised surrounding stop and search.
- Increased officer understanding about how they can be perceived by young people and the potential negative impact of stop and search.
- Reduced inappropriate use of stop and search.
- A reduction in the disproportionate use of stop and search on young people from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- More engagement between the police and young people – particularly between the police and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds and those most affected by stop and search.
- Young people feeling more safe and less fearful of the police, perceiving the police as fair and inclusive, and having confidence that disproportionate and inappropriate use stop and search is addressed within the area.
- Improved relationships between young people and the police – particularly for young people from ethnic minority backgrounds and those most affected by stop and search. This should result in

increased trust and confidence of young people, and increased perceptions of the legitimacy of police in relation to their use of stop and search powers on young people.

Description

This was a collaborative approach between Hampshire and Isle of White Constabulary, Basingstoke Unites Against Racism and Queen Mary's College.

Background

A local community group called [Basingstoke Unites Against Racism \(BUAR\)](#) was established following the murder of George Floyd and subsequent protests in 2020. BUAR aims to foster community cohesion by challenging the headlines and unsettling the silence around the issues and impacts of racism and discrimination.

Local police leaders engaged with BUAR following a gross misconduct case against six serving officers that resulted in their dismissal for unacceptable behaviour, including racism. Following this case, BUAR raised concerns about the disproportionality of stop and search being used on people from ethnic minority backgrounds. They also recognised the impact this has, including that on engagement with the police – people who feel discriminated against are less likely to engage with the police and often feel fearful of them.

Education and advocacy

To address these concerns, BUAR began working with the neighbourhood policing team and Queen Mary's College (QMC) to bring local officers and young people together to address this through education and advocacy. A key focus of the initiative is to engage with young people from minority communities who are disproportionality affected by stop and search.

PSHE Module (stage one)

BUAR and QMC are engaging with the local council about developing educational resources and introducing a stop and search module within the school curriculum for students in years six to nine.

Once students reach year 10, the intention is that they will be invited to attend the stop and search workshop.

PSHE workshops (stage two)

BUAR and QMC organise stop and search workshops that run through the year. Most of these take place in the autumn term to accommodate the needs of the school's academic calendar.

Year 10 students from all local secondary schools and colleges are invited to attend as part of PSHE. Each school or college is asked to bring around 10 students to attend, as well as advocates.

The workshops last half a school day and are hosted at a local school or college, though the location varies annually. The workshops prioritise attendance by young people from ethnic minority groups and people most impacted by stop and search attending, but they remain open for all students to attend to encourage allyship and upstanders. Uniformed police lead the facilitation of the workshops with BUAR representatives. This enables the young people to see the police and to build relationships with them.

The workshops start with a short introduction, showing attendees videos of stop and search encounters. A PowerPoint presentation is used, alongside a hand out if necessary to make the session more interactive. Attendees are provided with information on acronyms and an explanation of GOWISELY (an acronym used to spell out your rights if you are stopped and searched by the police), with an opportunity for attendees to ask questions. This ensures attendees are informed about good practice when the police use stop and search and what their rights are – for example, the ability to have a female officer present if they are female.

This is followed by smaller breakout sessions for further discussion. Each breakout group has between one and two officers with around five young people. They discuss stop and search in more detail and can ask questions. The young people are encouraged to talk about how they feel or would feel being stopped and searched, their own experiences of being stopped, and to ask questions about their experiences or for clarity around aspects of stop and search. The discussions are shaped by the young people and what they choose to discuss or ask questions about. The workshops end by the breakout groups coming back together to summarise the discussion points, any learning points, and actions to be taken by the police. Learning points and actions are captured and subsequent appropriate action is taken. Attendees are given a feedback survey to complete by the officer leading facilitation of the workshop.

Six workshops have been run so far, the first of which featured on [BBC South Today](#). The first workshop included 30 young people, due to COVID-19 restricting attendance. The second saw around 70 young people attend.

There has been interest from adult community members about being involved in the workshops, so there are plans to develop stop and search workshops for adults in the future. Local primary schools are also showing interest, so adapting the workshops to be suitable to facilitate this may be explored. Schools and colleges buddy up for workshops to make the delivery manageable and effective.

Advocacy (stage three)

Local police and BUAR train members of staff in secondary schools and colleges as stop and search advocates. While the module and workshops are centred around educating young people surrounding stop and search, advocates ensure sustainability. Young people voiced that they felt disempowered about what to do and who to speak to if they had a negative stop and search encounter. Many would not make a complaint to the police or tell their parents. Advocates provide a trusted person for students to go to, who will deal with the incident on their behalf.

Advocates are volunteers and each school signed up to the advocacy has one advocate. The advocate is advertised in the school or college so that students know who to go to. Advocates are provided with a specially designed badge so students can identify them. Schools are also given the logo to share on their website as having signed up to the scheme.

Students approach the advocate with an issue, who investigates and addresses it on their behalf. This involves discussing the issue with the police to bring about a resolution. Resolution may come following a discussion. However, if the advocate remains unsatisfied, body-worn video of the incident can be reviewed and they can go through the complaints procedure if needed. The young person can be involved in the process or parts of the process should they wish.

Advocates can also provide broader support to students a point of contact. They are provided with access to resources surrounding stop and search, can deliver learning, answers questions, provide challenge to the police, and can help to build relationships between students and local officers. This advocacy role is constantly evolving to meet a diverse range of needs.

Available advocates are present at the workshops to familiarise students with and introduce them to their points of contact.

There are eight schools and colleges signed up to the advocacy scheme so far and the workshops are hosted at one of these schools or colleges. The opportunity to be part of the advocacy scheme

is open to all local secondary schools and colleges.

Head teachers are engaged by QMC and BUAR to secure their support and for the school or college to become involved in the initiative. Work is ongoing to engage more secondary schools and colleges in this initiative across Hampshire.

Police now have advocacy business cards to give to any young person aged 11 to 18 who has been stopped and searched. This allows them to be advised that their school may have an advocate, what the advocate does and how to have any concerns addressed.

- [BUAR stop and search awareness and advocacy](#)
- [Stop and search awareness advocate](#)

Costs and resources

The neighbourhood policing team engages in this initiative as part of their business-as-usual work. The advocates are volunteers, so no additional costs are associated but their time is required to engage with the initiative. The workshops are hosted at schools or colleges engaged with the initiative, so the venue is free. BUAR, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary and QMC recruit and train advocates.

Current implementation status

Over the past year, a change in administration and personnel within the district police resulted in a temporary pause of the initiative. This transition highlighted the importance of maintaining strong institutional relationships rather than relying solely on individual champions. The force and partner organisations anticipate resuming the annual workshop in 2026 once all parties are realigned and processes are confirmed.

Evaluation

This initiative is new, so the evaluation is still developing. While some evidence of impact exists, much of the current evidence is anecdotal. Official feedback is being gathered in early 2024.

Surveys are being conducted before and after the workshops, led by BUAR, QMC and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary. The survey asks attendees about:

- their knowledge of stop and search
- their understanding about their rights during stop and search encounters
- how equipped they feel to challenge the police's use of stop and search
- their knowledge of policing and community safety
- whether they found the event informative
- whether they have been or know someone who has been stopped and searched

The police, BUAR and QMC plan to gather more qualitative data to explore any attitude changes and to establish greater detail about the initiative's impact generally, for a more thorough evaluation of the initiative.

Overall impact

Ongoing and planned activity in schools

BUAR is engaging with the local council about introducing the stop and search module within the school PSHE curriculum for students in years six to nine.

Initial results of the evaluation of the annual workshops have suggested that knowledge surrounding stop and search increased after attendance. The initiative is resulting in more engagement between the police and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds and those most affected by stop and search.

Young people are provided with more opportunities to safely discuss stop and search via the workshops and advocacy scheme. Young people have challenged the police's use of stop and search during workshops and via the advocacy scheme. Each school signed up to the advocacy scheme (seven schools so far) has an advocate for students who they can speak to, should they experience a negative stop and search encounter and who can help them to address this.

It's too early to say whether the initiative has contributed towards the intended outcomes.

Feedback from workshop attendees

Workshop attendees reported increased knowledge surrounding stop and search after attending the workshops.

Brighton Hill workshop

- Participants: 12 students, including 4 members of the school's Leaders in Race Equality group.
- Reach and Impact: these 4 leaders cascaded their learning to the wider student population of 1,300, amplifying the impact of the workshop.
- Pre- and Post-Workshop Knowledge Assessment: pre-workshop evaluations showed that 91.67% of participants rated their understanding of stop-and-search practices between 0 and 2 on a 5-point scale, reflecting limited knowledge. Post-workshop assessments indicated a remarkable improvement, with 83.33% rating their knowledge between 4 and 5.
Feedback: 100% of attendees affirmed that the session provided valuable insights and was relevant to their lives.
- Resources: attendees received a business-card-sized reference guide with a QR code linking to a dedicated webpage for ongoing learning and sharing knowledge with friends and family.
- Additional Insights: none of the participants had experienced being stopped and searched personally, although two were aware of someone who had been through the process.

Queen Mary College (QMC) workshop

- Participants: 16 students.
- Aspirations and discussions: the workshop opened with discussions on aspirations, with some students expressing interest in careers with the police in firearms and technology, indicating a positive shift in perceptions.
- Personal experiences: one 14-year-old girl shared her experience of being stopped and searched three months prior under suspicion of starting a fire. She described it as a neutral-to-positive experience, which contributes to building trust between young people and law enforcement.
- Teachers highlighted a key challenge: many young people avoid reporting concerns or experiences due to fear or misunderstanding, such as believing that searches with no positive outcome result in a criminal record. This revealed the need for further education to build confidence and trust.
- Student Questions: thought-provoking questions included:
 - whether young women could request female officers for searches
 - clarifications on religious headgear and cultural sensitivity, such as conducting searches involving headgear inside a station

Additional anecdotal evidence from young people suggests that the initiative may be having a positive impact on relationships between young people and the police – young people reported that they have not had many negative encounters with the police since engaging with officers throughout the initiative.

Informal feedback has included the following.

Thanks again for a wonderful workshop, our pupils took an awful lot from meeting and talking to the officers, they feel far more comfortable now than they did.

Workshop attendee

Our students were buzzing about it. And also said that it was nice to meet some police officers who were interested in their ideas.

Workshop attendee

Learning

- Educating people ensures they know how the police should use and conduct stop and searches.
- Rapport between those involved is key to having transparent and honest conversations.
- The police involved in the initiative wearing uniform ensures young people see that they are the police and build relationships with them.
- Building rapport with leadership within schools and colleges facilitates buy-in to the initiative and engagement.
- A holistic approach is required – all aspects of the initiative are required for this to be successful.
- It's essential for officers involved to have interest and buy-into the initiative.
- Having smaller breakout discussions enables engagement as all attendees have the opportunity to contribute.
- The PSHE module on stop and search embeds this learning into the curriculum, the workshops provide more in-depth education and discussion annually, and the advocacy ensures students have a point of contact throughout the year. This overall approach ensures the initiative takes a long-term and sustainable approach.

Challenges requiring consideration

- Resources are required to implement the initiative. This includes time, money and ensuring the capability of those involved.
- COVID-19 initially restricted the number of people who could attend workshops. With the easing of associated restrictions however, this is no longer a problem.
- School calendars are busy, so allocating time to engagement with this initiative can be a challenge.
- How to share learning from the initiative organisationally within the police requires consideration.
- Child Q requires careful consideration in relation to this initiative – advocates are essential and must be trusted adults for young people to go to.
- Resourcing requirements for upscaling need consideration. With plans for all year 10 students to attend workshops, how to make this happen in practice requires consideration – multiple workshops that facilitate engagement of more people may be required. Alternatively, advocates could facilitate smaller sessions in schools and colleges.
- If too many people are in each group for the breakout discussions, this is a barrier to engagement as not everyone's voices are heard.
- The next planned workshop was cancelled due to school scheduling conflicts and a change in the police command structure. However, this session is now rescheduled and will be held before the end of the 2024–2025 academic year.
- Working with the county to integrate this material into the curriculum, aiming to transition from optional workshops to a compulsory module or an annual assembly to ensure consistent and widespread awareness.
- The inclusion of resources, such as reference guides and QR codes linking to additional materials, has been invaluable in encouraging students to revisit and share their knowledge. Expanding these resources could further enhance the long-term impact of the workshops.
- Feedback from students, particularly at QMC, revealed that many young people fear reporting experiences with stop-and-search due to misconceptions, such as believing a search with no positive outcome results in a criminal record. This learning reinforces the need to consistently address these fears, further emphasising the importance of educating both students and their families.
- External police support in schools during assemblies or larger events could reinforce the key messages of the workshops and improve trust-building. This collaboration would also provide students with real-time answers to their questions and foster aspirations for careers in law enforcement.

- Educating young people is essential to inform communities of good practice in stop and search. For community trust and confidence in the police to be improved, however, the police must also ensure that they implement and adhere to this.

Copyright

The copyright in this shared practice example is not owned or managed by the College of Policing and is therefore not available for re-use under the terms of the Non-Commercial College Licence. You will need to seek permission from the copyright owner to reproduce their works.

Legal disclaimer

Disclaimer: The views, information or opinions expressed in this shared practice example are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or views of the College of Policing or the organisations involved.

Tags

Stop and search Equality Diversity and inclusion