

Notting Hill carnival in-event community scrutiny

Providing real-time insights via community feedback panel during a policing operation.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Community engagement Public order offences Diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI)
Organisation	British Transport Police
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Partners	Police Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	August 2022
Completion date	August 2022
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	Adults Children and young people Communities General public Workforce
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Aim

- To give a diverse panel the chance to review the use of police powers within a policing operation. This feedback is offered to officers from the community, alongside a review by a stop and search subject matter expert, within the policing operation, rather than an after-action review once it is finished.
- To increase communication between the police and seldom-heard individuals to inform practice around police powers, specifically at the Notting Hill carnival.
- To conduct quick-time engagement with the community, so that feedback was able to impact police operations during the event, rather than after the event.

Intended outcome

To improve the delivery of stop and search. This was achieved, as fewer searches were used compared to the prior year (so less community trauma and innocent people being searched). However, more finds were achieved, so a safeguarding positive outcome occurred. This drew upon active community engagement.

Description

The Notting Hill carnival is a large community event. The carnival is largely positive, however, in 2022 there was a small minority of individuals who committed high threat, harm risk offences, including a murder.

Delivered in the appropriate way, stop and search is an essential tool to keep communities safe and disrupt or deter offending. Despite stop and search being a small part of policing activity, it attracts

a lot of scrutiny. The impact of inappropriate stop and searches is huge and can leave individuals and communities with trauma.

Police powers give officers the ability to stop and search individuals if there is a reasonable suspicion that they will find a prohibited object, or in the case of Section 60, no grounds are needed for a frontline officer to conduct a stop and search. It is vital that stop and search practice is procedural, transparent and legitimate to inspire trust and confidence that the police use this power competently. The trauma caused by inappropriate use of stop and search can damage relationships between the police and communities. This is specifically relevant for minority communities who have been disproportionately affected by use of police powers.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICFRS) and the College of Policing are examining the use of police powers nationally to gain a better oversight and understanding of how and why they were enacted. Large events, such as the Notting Hill carnival, often attract a lot of stop and search use.

Community feedback panel

In 2022, the British Transport Police (BTP) developed a community feedback panel to inform practice surrounding police powers during the Notting Hill carnival. The community feedback panel functioned over both days of the carnival, and there were 11 members in total. The panel included a diverse range of people, with differing ethnicities, ages and experiences of police powers. This was important in offering a wider perspective to the police.

Representatives of BTP's Staff Association for Minority Ethnic Staff (SAMES) also attended the panel meetings. 33% of members had lived experience of police powers being enacted on them, 33% identified as black and minority ethnic, 33% identified being female and 25% identified as black self-defined categories.

The meeting was held online to increase accessibility for those who did not feel comfortable going into a police station. The sessions were recorded to be used as a training piece and increase the longevity of its impact. During the meeting, the panel discussed how they felt the police should use their powers and any concerns they had. The meeting also acted as a two-way form of communication, where the BTP shared good practice with the panel and how they are building on advice.

The panel was active throughout the Notting Hill carnival, meaning that feedback was current, live and could be applied directly. This was identified as an advantage of this approach because, instead of waiting and receiving community feedback after the event, BTP were able to implement improvements in their practice quickly. The Analysis and Insight team were central to the rapid response during the Notting Hill carnival, in which planning began months before the carnival.

Day one

During day one, the panel were invited to conduct live scrutiny on stop and search activity during the carnival. This took place until 4pm. In this time there were six stop and searches in London, two did not relate to the carnival and were outside London but still included. On day one, the panel included four community advocates, two British Transport Police Independent Advisory Group members, one Croydon Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) community chair and one captain of industry (a director of a financial tech company).

Results from day one found that 2/6 of the stop and searches were reasonable, 1/6 of the stop and searches were unreasonable, and 3/6 of the stop and searches were inconclusive. The panel declared one of the stop and searches unreasonable as they did not feel that the officer justified their use of power. This reflected the force headquarters' review of the same stop and searches, where 5/6 were deemed reasonable or reasonable with minor observations and 1/6 was found to be unreasonable.

Through the community discussions, search themes were explored. These included the searching of children and young people, searches that expose intimate parts, and weapon searches. Feedback from these discussions was provided to the command team at regular command meetings.

Day two

During day two, the panel was made up of nine members: one Croydon MPS Chair of community monitoring group, two members of the Strategic British Transport Police Independent Advisory Group, one British Transport Police Officer representing SAMES, one Chair of MET Police Westminster Stop and Search Monitoring Group, three C divisional members of the Independent Advisory Group, and one member of the stop and search group.

The panel focused on stop and searches relating to children and young people. All stop and searches of children and young people before 4.30pm on the second day of the Notting Hill carnival

were reviewed. 5/6 stop and searches were voted as reasonable, 1/6 was voted unreasonable. The force headquarters reviewed all stop and searched as reasonable; this was explained to the community group to aid transparency.

The searches from Notting Hill carnival on day two were assessed as of higher quality due to the feedback from day one. The improvement from day one to two was noted by the panel and commended as a sign the officers were listening to feedback.

The assistant chief constable sent letters of thanks to all participants of the panel.

Overall impact

As a result of the community feedback panel, the police were able to improve their stop and search practice during the Notting Hill carnival.

This is reflected in data from Notting Hill carnival stop and searches. During the carnival, 39 stop and searches were carried out. 23 of those searches resulted in positive outcomes, producing a 59% find rate. The force's national find rate was at 43% in 2022. Day one's find rate was 53%, and day two's find rate rose to 64%. This improvement is testament to the active levels of engagement that took place during the Scrutiny Panel and the operational influence it held.

Since the Notting Hill carnival, the panel format has continued, with panels reviewing other police practices such as body worn video. The body worn video panel members were vetted beforehand. This practice has been celebrated as innovative within the Criminal Justice Alliance super-complaint.

Learning

It transpired that some of the searches which did not meet the written standard were from special constables. The standard is set in law under [PACE Code A](#) and internal governance tests against this standard. A continuing professional development (CPD) input was delivered to them, alongside benefitting from training as a 'champion', and other measures were put in place such as pairing with a substantive officer.

Interest in community focus groups was seen in addressing other controversial public events like protests, where the police could benefit from having dynamic community oversight of practice.

The buy in was successful and sponsored by the chief officer group. Feedback from officers after the carnival were also positive.

Feedback

- Superintendent feedback: "Dynamic stop search scrutiny panels helped assure within the operation British Transport Police (BTP) were using our powers legitimately and with the tacit support of the community. We used the feedback from day one to further improve our positioning on day two. I am grateful to each member who dedicated their time to support this endeavour."
- Gold commander assistant chief constable feedback: "Moreover, it ensured that we had a real organisational consciousness around Stop Search – and its impact – at the core of our regular command meetings. The improvement is testament to the active levels of engagement that took place during the Scrutiny Panel."
- Police constable feedback: "Receiving feedback which celebrated good practice emboldened officers to continue on plus not be worried about this process, therefore it did not lead to a withdrawal from the power as was first feared."

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Tags

Stop and search Crime reduction