

Juvenile stop and search review

Assessing and providing an action plan to the child centred policing team for each child stopped and searched in Cumbria.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Community engagement
Organisation	Cumbria Constabulary
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2023–25 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of Cumbria Constabulary
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Region	North West
Partners	Police Local authority Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	November 2023
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Children and young people

Aim

The aim of the initiative is to ensure vulnerability and safeguarding opportunities are not missed regarding juvenile stop and search.

Intended outcome

The outcome is case-by-case dependant. Intended outcomes can include:

- a reduction in crime committed such as drug offences, knife crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB)
- addressing identified vulnerabilities with children and their family, and providing appropriate support to allow the child to live a healthy fulfilled life

Description

Previously, juvenile stop and search cases were reviewed by a sergeant through dip sampling to give feedback to officers. However, this review highlighted some juvenile stop and search cases where parents had not been notified, which meant safeguarding, intervention and diversion opportunities were missed.

In response, the force has changed the review process for juvenile stop and searches. Currently, the force reviews all stop and search cases of children and young people under the age of 18. Every time a child is stopped and searched within Cumbria, the local children centred policing team is informed. The child centred policing team in Cumbria is made up of:

- an inspector
- three youth justice police constables

- nine early intervention officers
- four missing, exploited, trafficked coordinators
- a missing, exploited, trafficked detective sergeant
- two uniformed sergeants who oversee the early intervention officers

When a stop and search is recorded, an email is sent to a specialised inbox with the reference number. Sergeants from the children centred policing team review each incident and decide if further action needs to be taken, considering risk and vulnerabilities.

If further action needs to be taken, the team decides how best to communicate with the child and their family to offer support and guidance. The type of intervention depends on the nature of the stop and search and the child. Actions taken can range from:

- Parents being made aware, visiting the home address, or in cases of high vulnerability, allocating one-to-one work with the child.
- Home visits if the family needed support and referrals are made to relevant partners.
- A police officer doing one-on-one work with the child to identify their needs.
- Information and circumstances are shared with social workers if relevant and applicable.
- When no specific issues are identified, a letter is sent home to the parents or guardians to inform them of police interaction(s).

The child centred policing team works with various schemes or partners to provide children identified as vulnerable with appropriate support. There is no specific list of partners as they are approached on a case-by-case basis. The child centred policing team has close ties with local authorities, so they can link with local partnerships such as mental health charities and LGBTQ+ youth groups, depending on a child's needs.

External and internal partners the team have worked with include:

- Women's Community Matters for young women that are victims of domestic abuse and violence.
- The child centred policing team's One-Up scheme, a 12-week sport initiative for at-risk young people.
- Cumbria's substance issue officers.
- Holocaust remembrance groups.

The child centred policing team is currently creating a feedback survey for parents or guardians of children. This will enable the team to understand what parts of the process are working well and what could be improved.

Overall impact

Following the changes made to the juvenile stop and search process, the force recorded the following reductions in youth crime:

- Youth repeat reoffending reduced by 12.2% between September 2023 to September 2024.
- Youth miscellaneous crimes against society reduced by 46% between April to September 2024 compared to the same period in 2023.

Police interventions following a juvenile stop and search also had a positive effect on children's lives:

- The team has worked with several children that had repeatedly gone missing. Following the introduction of the new stop and search model, there has been a 55% reduction in missing children in care between September 2023 and September 2024.
- Schools in Cumbria have also reported to the force that there are several children who have come back into education after police-led interventions.

The child centred policing team has also received positive feedback from the parents of children following police initiatives, saying there has been a big improvement in their family life.

An example of intervention following a stop and search:

One child was stopped with fireworks. Officers completed a home visit and identified parents were struggling with his behaviour issues. The force have then carried out a range one-on-one work with child addressing behaviour, looking at causes, helping them identify triggers and working on coping mechanisms. Their behaviour vastly improved in both home and school and they have not had further interactions with the police.

Learning

- The model was easy to implement and gained buy-in from officers. It would be easy to replicate in forces and departments that have child-centred teams.

- When reviewing stop and search cases, it is also important to highlight officer's good work and give positive feedback.

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