

Agenda Item 10

31 October 2006

Community and Race Relations Committee

Report by the Chief Constable

Use of Stop and Stop/Search Powers within Cumbria

Outline

It was agreed by members that the impact/success of 'stops' on criminality be reported to the Community and Race Relations Committee every six months.

This report provides data on the use of powers for the most current period available (April to August 2006 inclusive), as well as commentary on the use of the tactics in Cumbria.

The use of the powers has remained relatively constant and the extent of disproportionality based upon ethnicity of the person stopped is also low. However, stop and search continues to be a valuable tactic to prevent and detect crime.

Recommendation

Members are invited to note the current position and continue to monitor the use of these powers within the force.

Background

Statistical data relates the use of stop and search to the resident ethnic minority population of an area, in order to assess the presence of disproportionality. If the police are routinely stopping proportionally more people from a particular ethnic background than live within an area, then this may constitute evidence of unfair use of the powers. We seek to prevent either the harassment of an individual or community, or the inappropriate use of the powers by an individual officer or group of officers.

The 2001 census data shows that 0.7% of the population of Cumbria was from an ethnic minority background.

Details of the statistics on the use of the powers between April and August 2006 are listed at Appendix 1. The format for presentation of this data has been improved to assist members, although caution should continue to be observed in the use of very small sample sizes to identify long term or significant trends

The only significant trend relates to the use of stop and search powers in South Cumbria police area. This has been questioned through the Area command team and found to result from a recording error by officers in that area, which has since been corrected. (In short, on the stop search forms there are boxes for self defined ethnicity and for officer defined ethnicity. Both need to be completed. However they need to be completed in different ways with different definitions. The confusion has arisen over the use of the officer defined code. From initial recording it appeared as if officers were stopping a disproportionate number of people from minority communities, when they were in fact stopping white British people.)

Members may be aware that the Police Standards Unit includes the use of Stop and Search powers as part of the Citizen's focus PPAF indicator. The Standards Unit has very recently questioned our performance in this area on the basis that when we use Stop and Search powers it results in the arrest of significantly more people from BME communities than from the majority white community. This has led them to question whether our use of the powers on white people is sufficiently targeted. This will be the subject of further review during the next reporting period.

Checks for the period have revealed that no complaints were made by any person in relation to the use of the police powers for stop and search during the period in question.

The effect of the use of this power on criminality remains significant. Officers are required to only use stop powers in accordance with the intelligence available to them about offending patterns. The result is that officers target offenders very effectively. Use of the powers leads to the recovery of illicit substances, weapons and stolen property, and the arrest of individuals. It has also led to the confiscation of criminal assets, such as money destined for the purchase of drugs. It also acts as a deterrent to offenders, and helps the Constabulary to keep Cumbria a safe place to live and work.

M Baxter
Chief Constable

Appendix 1 - Stop Search Figures (April - August 2006)

White - Year to Date 2006

Area	Searches	Population	Per Population 1000
The Constabulary	2949	484057	6.1
North	928	149410	6.2
South	1040	172894	6.0
West	981	161753	6.1

All Minority Ethnic Groups - Year to Date 2006

Area	Searches	Population	Per Population 1000	Index	Difference
The Constabulary	52	3549	14.7	2.4	Significantly Higher
North	7	1105	6.3	1.0	No Difference
South	43	1387	31.0	5.2	Significantly Higher
West	2	1057	1.9	0.3	No Difference

Black - Year to Date 2006

Area	Searches	Population	Per Population 1000	Index	Difference
The Constabulary	8	301	26.6	4.4	Significantly Higher
North	1	84	11.9	1.9	No Difference
South	7	132	53.0	8.8	Significantly Higher
West	0	85	0.0	0.0	No Difference

Asian - Year to Date 2006

Area	Searches	Population	Per Population 1000	Index	Difference
The Constabulary	32	860	37.2	6.1	Significantly Higher
North	3	323	9.3	1.5	No Difference
South	29	265	109.4	18.2	Significantly Higher
West	0	272	0.0	0.0	No Difference

Other Minority Groups (Including Mixed race) - Year to Date 2006

Area	Searches	Population	Per Population 1000	Index	Difference
The Constabulary	12	2388	5.0	0.8	No Difference
North	3	698	4.3	0.7	No Difference
South	7	990	7.1	1.2	No Difference
West	2	700	2.9	0.5	No Difference

