

Stop and Search timeline of events in Scotland 2013 - 2019

2013

- *August:* The **Scottish Police Authority (SPA)** decides to do a scrutiny review of stop and search (S&S) in Scotland. *The Herald* publishes a series of articles questioning the S&S tactic.

2014

- **Kath Murray**, a PhD researcher, publishes her research on S&S on 17/01/2014 and these are presented in the media as well. Makes the national news (KM also writes editorial for *The Guardian*). She highlights the **large volume of searches in Scotland, the majority of which are not based on statutory grounds, and disproportionate impact young people.**
- (30/05/2014) The **Scottish Police Authority** publishes its findings from its scrutiny of S&S. The SPA recommends improvements to training, making S&S outcome-focused, address the perception of volume as the goal, use more analysis tools to make it intelligence-led, make S&S proportionate (esp with youth), record details of those searched as well as 'information' about those who refuse consensual searches, and ensure those searched consensually are aware of their right to decline.
- *May/June:* **Police Scotland** announce improvement plan in response to scrutiny. This includes establishing the National Stop Search Unit, appointment of short-term working group and a stop and search pilot.
- *December:* Megan O'Neill and Liz Aston (SIPR) begin the fieldwork for their evaluation of the Fife Pilot. This is part funded by the **Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR)** and Police Scotland.

2015

- *February:* 1/02/2015 **Scottish Human Rights Commission** calls for an end to consensual search.
- 4/02/2015 The BBC reveals that the S&S database shows that 356 children under 12 were searched since June 2014, after Police Scotland said they would end the practice. Political pressure mounting to end consensual S&S as well as pressure from Scottish Human Rights Commission.
- *March:* **Police Scotland** publish its own report (30/3/2015) on S&S for the Cabinet Secretary for Justice which includes 18 recommendations. Commits to publishing S&S data on a quarterly basis, to work with SPA to assess the outcomes of S&S and to develop improved auditing which will be reported to SPA and SG on a regular basis.
- **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Scotland (HMICS)** publish (30/3/2015) the findings from its review of S&S (Phase I). There are 23 recommendations. Recommend Code of Practice, removal of targets, improved recording and public reporting of S&S figures. Suggest a move towards statutory S&S only. Also makes suggestions for improvements to supervision, audit and governance. Says it has no confidence in S&S data and so should not be used to make decisions on about policy and practice. HMICS questions the link between S&S and prevention of crime and urges a problem-solving approach to prevention in collaboration with partners. HMICS notes the issue of alcohol seizures being recorded as searches and the impact of search on young people. HMICS will audit S&S records in due course.
- **Scottish Government** announces (31/3/2015) the creation of an **Independent Advisory Group (IAG)** to investigate and report on S&S, in particular, consensual search and the need for a Code of Practice. It is to be led by **John Scott QC**, includes **Prof Susan McVie** and will report in September.
- *June:* **O'Neill et al (SIPR)** publish findings and 19 recommendations from their **evaluation of the Fife Pilot**. Although some aspects were good practice, in the main there was not a dramatic change to S&S in Fife and the volume of activity initially went up during the pilot period. Officers reported a sense of needing to meet targets. Recommend an end to consensual search
- *June:* Police Scotland implement the **enhanced database** for S&S on 1/06/2015.
- Police Scotland launch the **Stop and Search Improvement Plan 2015/16 (Testing Phase I)**. This outlines the S&S governance structure, the actions taken to date against the 72 recommendations from the various reports (SPA, HMICS, PS, SIPR) as well as planned actions. Begins the 100% internal audit of S&S records.

- *September: Independent Advisory Group* publishes its report (03/09/2015). Recommends a **Code of Practice**, an end to non-statutory searches when the Code comes into effect and a change to the legislation to support these. Does not make a decision on the power to search children for alcohol.
- Police Scotland **accept the findings of the IAG** and publicly **publish the first set of S&S data**.
- *October: Police Scotland* publish **Stop and Search Improvement Plan 2015/16 (Interim Consensual Phase II)**. Builds on the Plan from June, incorporates the 10 recommendations from the IAG and to prepare for the end to consensual searches.
- *December: Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill passed by Parliament*, which ends the practice of non-statutory searches and brings in the Code of Practice for S&S.

2016

- *January: Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016* gains royal assent.
- *September/October: Training on S&S and the Code of Practice launched*. All officers from Constable to Inspector to receive the training. Train the trainer events in September, roll-out of full training in October. Training continues into 2017.
- *October: Police Scotland* publish **Stop and Search Improvement Plan 2016/17 (Code Phase III)**. Updates on progress against the recommendations from the previous plan and outlines future steps which will be taken. Outlines S&S training.

2017

- *February: HMICS* presents its follow-up report on S&S. **All of the previous 23 recommendations have been met**. Finds good compliance with recording procedures and auditing.
- *May: Code of Practice comes into effect 11 May 2017*. This will be reviewed by the IAG at 6 months and 12 months.
- *October: Police Scotland* publish **response to the Fife Pilot Evaluation** (O'Neill et al/SIPR)

2018

- **Independent Advisory Group** publishes the Six-Month Review of the Code of Practice 2018

2019

- **Independent Advisory Group** publishes the Twelve-Month Review of the Code of Practice June 2019, qualitative and quantitative reports