

METRO in focus

Step over here once again, sir...

POLICE stop and search powers haven't stopped Barry from breaking the law – he has no criminal convictions.

But they have deterred the 20-year-old from spending time on his estate in Kilburn, north London. He estimates he has been stopped more than 100 times but police have never found anything on him. 'I don't even want to shop

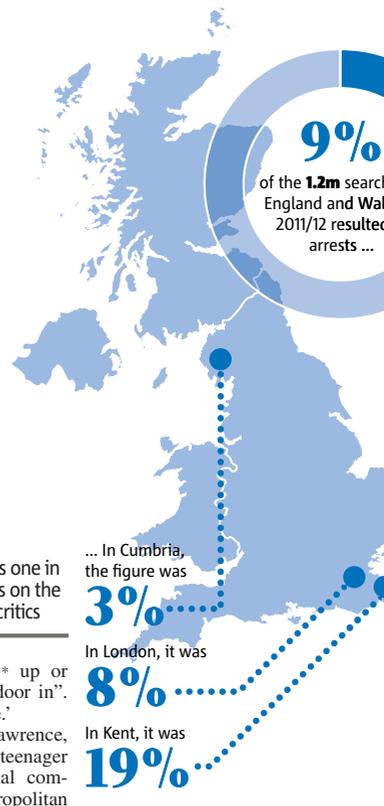
Stop and search is back on the agenda as a police watchdog finds one in four stops is unlawful and the home secretary asks for your views on the controversial power. **ETAN SMALLMAN** talks to police and their critics

with my mum any more,' he said. 'It just looks bad. You'll just be going to the shops – you'll be stopped and then taken for a strip search. I feel embarrassed.'

Barry, not his real name, added: 'When I have complained, I've

been told, "shut the f*** up or we're going to do your door in". That is their favourite line.'

In January, Stuart Lawrence, brother of murdered teenager Stephen, lodged a formal complaint with the Metropolitan



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9%
fewer people were stopped and searched last year compared with 2011

71% of the public think the police should be able to use stop and search

74% think it is used fairly

Black people were **7 times** more likely than white people to be stopped and searched in 2009/10

7.3x more likely in 2008/09

6x more likely in 2006/07



It takes on average **16** minutes to conduct a stop and search and process details. That is **312,000** hours each year and the equivalent time of **145** full-time police officers

Sources:
Home Office, Metropolitan Police's Public Attitude Survey

Police, alleging he had been stopped or searched by officers 25 times since he was 17. But it is not just men who complain of their treatment.

Janet Hills, chairwoman of the Metropolitan Black Police Association, told Metro: 'I've been stopped and searched when I've been on the street more times than I've used the actual power.'

Earlier this month, the police watchdog Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary reported one in four people was stopped unlawfully.

An Independent Police Complaints Commission inquiry also found the Met failed to tackle complaints of racism fairly.

Home secretary Theresa May has announced a consultation into stop and search, which runs until August 13.

BUT, while the teenagers on Barry's Kilburn estate may not believe it, Brent is one of the best performing London boroughs for stop and search.

In two years, arrests or 'cannabis warnings' issued after searches have increased from 16 per cent to 30 per cent, while crime is falling.

There is a focus on intelligence-led policing and establishing correct grounds for searches. Statistics are monitored and officers whose 'positive outcome rate' is below par are sent for retraining.

Det Supt Simon Rose called on those aware of any abuses to complain.

'I can obtain corroboration of any complaint from the GPS on the officer's radio,' he said.

'If we have anonymous complaints, we can use undercover officers or actors posing as members of the public, create a fictitious call and see if the officers who are sent to the incident behave in the way claimed. If they do, we can prosecute or sack

them.' While trying to address the disproportionate figures of ethnic minorities stopped, police are under political and public pressure to seize more weapons and drugs.

Some campaigners, such as actress Linda Robson whose son was with 16-year-old Ben Kinsella in Islington when he was stabbed to death in 2008, have called for more stops to have a hope of tackling knife crime.

Police also face criminals well versed in dropping weapons under cars in anticipation of a search, or popping them down their underpants.

Some gloat at officers while smelling of cannabis: 'It's too late, I've smoked it all.'

However, technology may play a crucial part in reforming the system, as unprofessional officers risk being caught out on YouTube.

The Stop And Search UK app, which is backed by police, also lets you know your rights.

In Greater Manchester, all stop and searches are processed by radio, so time and location are recorded automatically – bringing the average time down from 25 minutes to three.

Labour's Diane Abbott, MP for Hackney, has campaigned on the issue for more than 25 years and fears the new consultation is 'window dressing'.

She said: 'The amount of crime picked up is so small, relatively speaking, it's hard to escape the conclusion the level of stop and search among black and Muslim communities is driven by some assumptions about young people on the street.'

Does she mean racist assumptions?

'I'm saying assumptions. People must judge for themselves what those assumptions are.'

 **To take part in the consultation, visit www.gov.uk/government/consultations/stop-and-search**

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