

June 2021

Dear Home Secretary,

Re. Getting the balance right: an inspection of how effectively the police deal with protests.

Thank-you for the recent HMICFRS inspection report on how effectively the police response to public protests and events which potentially have an impact on public safety.

The report outlines HMICFRS's recommendations for the Home Office, National Police Chiefs' Council, College of Policing, and police services nationwide. West Yorkshire Police were one of the 10 principal forces who contributed to this inspection, and his letter briefly describes our local police service's actions in response to the report's recommendations.

The policing of public protests is a sensitive area where forces try to manage and balance the conflicting needs of individuals – in this case the rights of protestors and the rights of citizens to be free to fulfil their daily lives without disruption. The 'Extinction Rebellion' protests of 2019 are the case in point. Here in West Yorkshire, these protests were conducted peacefully but brought several days' worth of disruption to pedestrians and road users in central Leeds. We are grateful to West Yorkshire Police and their partners for their part in managing this event successfully.

This report offers meaningful proposals to supervise and balance the needs of protestors, residents and workers in our city centres. In response to the report's recommendations and identified 'areas for improvement', I would like to highlight the following actions from West Yorkshire Police:

▪ **Area for improvement**

The police's protest-related community impact assessments are an area for improvement, particularly those that need to be completed after the event.

These assessments should assist the police to understand fully the impact of protests on communities. They should include assessments of the impact of protest on local residents, visitors to an area, businesses, and the critical infrastructure including transport networks and hospitals.

West Yorkshire Police are currently developing their processes so that a lead officer ('Community Bronze') will be assigned to each protest/event of significance, and that this officer will be responsible for completing a Community Impact Assessment and Business Impact Assessment at the outset. The Business Impact Assessment will identify the contact details of a Business Liaison Officer in each commercial centre to

act as a bridge between the force and local businesses who may be impacted by the protest/event.

- **Recommendation**

By 31 December 2021, chief constables should ensure that their forces have sufficiently robust governance arrangements in place to secure consistent, effective debrief processes for protest policing.

An internal debrief process is being prepared for consultation whereby smaller-scale events undergo a proportionate debrief and larger-scale events are reviewed by a trained debrief officer in conjunction with representatives of partner agencies. Debrief reports will be reviewed and approved by a senior officer (such as an Assistant Chief Constable or Superintendent) and any actions or changes to practice identified from the debrief will be tracked and monitored by the Force Steering Group for the Public Order Policing Strategic Risk Assessment (POPSRA).

- **Area for improvement**

On a national, regional and local basis, the police should develop a stronger rationale for determining the number of commanders, specialist officers and staff needed to police protests.

West Yorkshire Police has finalised a Chief Officer Team paper, to be presented this month, where a definitive process for the selection and training of protest/event commanders is approved for implementation. This proposal aims to improve the allocation of the management of events to a commander dependent on their experience and developmental needs, and which also aims for wider inclusion of under-represented groups within the command structure. This process also aims to develop a more sophisticated understanding of demand on police time generated by such events, and the appropriate command structure needed to ensure public safety.

- **Area for improvement**

Forces should improve the quality of the protest-related intelligence they provide to the National Police Coordination Centre's Strategic Intelligence and Briefing team.

An action has been raised by the force Public Order Policing Strategic Risk Assessment Steering Group to initiate a meeting between our Director of Intelligence and public order force lead to discuss how to improve information and intelligence gathering for protests/events by developing new information sources.

- **Recommendation**

By 31 December 2021, chief constables should make sure that their legal services teams subscribe to the College of Policing Knowledge Hub's Association of Police Lawyers group.

West Yorkshire Police's Head of Legal Services has subscribed to the Knowledge Hub and will review this resource on a regular basis to share any relevant information with appropriate staff in the WYP legal team. This recommendation has now been finalised by HMICFRS as complete.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has recently transferred to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, under the leadership of the newly elected Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin. Going forward, scrutiny of the work of West Yorkshire Police will be led by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Policing & Crime.

Alison Lowe is now the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime designate having been confirmed in post by the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel.

Yours,

Janine Nelson, Head of Policing and Crime

West Yorkshire Combined Authority