



17.1.22

Dear Home Secretary,

**Re. HMICFRS PEEL Assessment of West Yorkshire Police 2020/21**

November's PEEL assessment report provides an important update on HMICFRS inspectors' review of the effectiveness and legitimacy of our local police service. This report provides the first West Yorkshire Police PEEL assessment since March 2020, and reflects the new methodology which HMICFRS have adopted to evaluate the effectiveness of police services across the country.

In 2020's report (covering 2018/19), West Yorkshire Police (WYP) received a positive assessment, with 'Good' grades awarded for Effectiveness and Legitimacy, and an 'Outstanding' grade for Efficiency. However, the report also recommended that work was needed to improve the force's performance in investigations which included vulnerable individuals.

I am pleased to see in this latest report that HMICFRS have identified strong performance by West Yorkshire Police and improvements to those areas highlighted in 2020 as causes of concern. In the latest report, the inspectors have awarded four 'Outstanding' grades, four 'Good' grades, and two 'Adequate' grades, and the report has been published alongside a note of congratulations from HM Inspector of Constabulary, Andy Cooke QPM.

HMICFRS have recognised 'Outstanding' performance in areas such as preventing crime, treatment of the public, and disrupting serious and organised crime; and 'Good' grades have been awarded for important topics such as managing offenders and protecting vulnerable people. 'Adequate' grades applied to performance in investigating crime and supporting victims.

I am really encouraged by the findings of this PEEL assessment. This positive report is a great accolade and is a real reflection of the commitment and skill show by our police officers and police staff here in West Yorkshire, particularly during the era of the COVID pandemic, and some of the most challenging times in our living memory.



**Tracy Brabin**  
**Mayor**  
of West Yorkshire



**Alison Lowe**  
**Deputy Mayor**  
for Policing and Crime

At the time of writing, West Yorkshire Police have the largest number of ‘outstanding’ and ‘good’ grades (eight, from a maximum of ten) of any force with a published assessment for 2020/21.

The PEEL report recognises West Yorkshire Police’s strong record on community engagement, investment in its neighbourhood policing model, and its comprehensive evaluation of the use of Stop and Search; we applaud WYP for this work, and its effort to improve the standard of its investigations.

Once again, we must work with WYP to see that appropriate improvements are made with regard to the ‘Areas for Improvement’ that inspectors have identified; namely recognising vulnerable or repeat victims at the first point of contact; providing crime prevention or evidence preservation advice, also at the first point of contact; and completing a victim initial needs assessment in all cases.

I am sure that many of these topics will be seen as particularly important by West Yorkshire residents, and I too will be eager to see that improvements are made in the force’s service to victims. I report on the following pages of this response that work is already well underway to address these issues.

The upcoming months will see the publishing of the first mayoral Police and Crime Plan for West Yorkshire – a document which sets out our vision for what I believe is a once in a generation opportunity to bring together partners to create a ‘public health approach’ to policing and crime prevention in West Yorkshire.

Our partners at West Yorkshire Police will naturally play a huge part in the delivery of this plan, and I look forward to working with them to build on the commendable work identified during this PEEL inspection.

Yours,

Tracy Brabin  
Mayor of West Yorkshire

Alison Lowe OBE  
Deputy Mayor of West Yorkshire for  
Policing and Crime



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## **Feedback from West Yorkshire Police on PEEL assessment 'Areas for Improvement' (AFIs)**

### **The force should take action to ensure that investigators work with and support victims and witnesses to understand their needs.**

A detailed Victims Needs Assessment Review is ongoing to support West Yorkshire Police's 'Victims' Journey' workstream dedicated to improving the service provided to victims of crime. This review has examined the processes used by departments and officers throughout the victim journey, and subsequent changes to templates and processes will make clear the responsibility for completing a Victim Needs Assessment (VNA), and ensuring it is compliant with the Victims' Code.

Upon the implementation of new VNA processes, there will be a full force-wide training programme to support the changes in technology, and ensure that the victim is at the heart of the process. This will allow WYP to better support victims and provide all services with better information, recognising at the earliest stage possible where vulnerabilities may exist, and whether there is a requirement for Special Measures to support victims. This programme is expected to be implemented from March / April 2022 onwards, and has already completed a phase of benchmarking, internally and externally, to ensure it will meet victims' needs.

The West Yorkshire Witness Care Unit works closely with a number of partners during our interaction with victims of crime. Over the years, the Witness Care Unit has developed an excellent relationship with many local victim support agencies, and we work very closely with these and all partners to ensure vulnerable victims feel supported.

The Witness Care Unit provides a full Needs Assessment for all victims as soon as their attendance is known to be required at a trial. This detailed assessment includes questions regarding the victim's ability to attend court and whether they require any supportive measures to assist them. If victims require different types of support (e.g. a separate waiting area, pre-court visit, entry via a different door), the victim is then referred by WYP to the court-based Witness Service who will speak directly with the victim and make these arrangements.

WYP will also make referrals to West Yorkshire's *Victim Support* service if the victim has previously declined, but would now like to take that service, and the same applies with victims of domestic abuse (for example), who advise they would now like the option of speaking to one of the agencies who provide support services.



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**The force should ensure that when it is sharing information with children's social care organisations about vulnerable children, a full picture of information is shared.**

The recent West Yorkshire Police PEEL inspection identified that the force was delivering effective safeguarding of vulnerable people across its five districts. However, HMICFRS inspectors concluded that the consistency of multi-agency partnership working arrangements could be improved and that the force should ensure that when it is sharing information with Children's Social Care organisations about vulnerable children, a full picture of information is shared. This refers to WYP's ability to share information to allow for consistent assessment of the cumulative risk to an individual with partner agencies, particularly key statutory partners in social care, health and education sectors.

The AFI places a requirement on WYP to work with colleagues across the five West Yorkshire districts in Children's Social Care services to address improvements in information sharing. Positive changes here have already commenced: the Force can update that Calderdale District have implemented an approach whereby in instances where low level information about an individual is referred to the police on three occasions, local Children's Social Care services will then act on this information, and fully record, review, and follow up. This approach is has been adopted by other social care departments across the West Yorkshire area.

In response to the PEEL findings, the force has instigated a full review of Children's Safeguarding arrangements and processes. WYP Central Safeguarding Governance has successfully brought partners together to review and develop improvement opportunities across the key partnerships with social care, health, and education services. As part of this review, partnership information sharing protocols and processes are being evaluated.

Also of note is the force's participation in a national policing and partnership MASH/'Front Door' working group led by West Mercia Police, to adopt best practice in this arena.

**The force should ensure that an auditable record is made of a victim's decision to withdraw support for an investigation, or of their wishes for an out-of-court disposal.**

Oversight of a victim's decision to withdraw support is provided by the Victims' Journey Delivery Team, who carry out thematic or holistic investigative reviews. A recent audit completed by the Internal Audit Team on behalf of the Victims' Journey Team, found that 249 of 250 Domestic Abuse outcomes that were recorded as Outcome 16 (suspect known, victim withdraws support for police action) were correctly recorded.

To enhance our approach further, an Outcome 16 finalisation template has been created which ensures that an 'Evidence Led Prosecution' has been considered. This template ensures the victim's voice is clearly heard in the investigation through recording the rationale and reasons why Outcome 16 is the appropriate outcome.



A Key Investigative Summary (KIS) and Victim Needs Assessment will also capture the victim's wishes regarding prosecution and caution. It is anticipated that refreshed recording templates will be launched in January 2022.

Finally, West Yorkshire Police has collaborated with the Crown Prosecution Service and created a toolkit to empower staff to consider Evidence Led Prosecutions where the victim withdraws support for action. The CPS has delivered training for police supervisors on Evidence Led Prosecutions, which is also available on the WYP's *iLearn* portal, and can be accessed by all staff.

Organisationally quality assurance is provided to this aspect of work through regular Supervisor Reviews of ongoing investigations, as is outlined in the WYP's Investigation and Released Under Investigation Policy.

**The force should ensure that call handlers provide an effective assessment and structured triage that is consistently applied, and that all risks are identified and recorded on force systems.**

Work commenced on addressing this Area for Improvement during the HMICFRS PEEL inspection. Since then, the WYP Contact function has undertaken extensive work on risk assessment by callers through THRIVE. A recent audit of processes revealed a compliance rate of 97% on calls to the unit containing such a triage, with 89% of THRIVE assessments being graded as "good". This audit was undertaken whilst re-training was ongoing and not finalised, but provides an early indicator of progress and that remedial measures taken are being effective.

The few remaining staff requiring training will be trained before the end of January 2022, and the Contact department have arranged with WYP's Audit Team that a further piece of work will be completed by the end of February 2022 to review full compliance.

In terms of governance, the THRIVE working group which was set up to monitor this project remains in place and will continue to track, review, and implement change as required to improve service levels.