



12th February 2025

Dear Home Secretary,

Re: An inspection of the police response to the public disorder in July and August 2024- Tranche 1

I welcome the inspection of the police response to the public disorder in July and August 2024 given the importance of this rapid review in identifying lessons for the future. Whilst protests are a pivotal part of our democracy, unlawful violence and disorder will not be tolerated in our region. It is right that we look at the capacity of our force in their ability to deal with such incidents, and what can be done to ensure the wellbeing of our officers who are affected.

West Yorkshire Police's public order capability was tested as the force was asked to provide significant resources to the national mutual aid requirements for the disorder seen across other parts of the country this summer. Whilst there was one instance of affray during a demonstration in Leeds city centre, West Yorkshire did not see the violent disorder that had taken hold elsewhere in the country. This operation saw officers from West Yorkshire deployed to Merseyside, Cleveland and South Yorkshire in various capacities. West Yorkshire Police were also proactive in their approach to tackling incitement offences and secured the first national charge (and subsequent conviction) for publishing written material intended to stir up racial hatred.

The force's public order capability was also tested earlier in summer 2024 when disorder broke out in Harehills in Leeds on the evening of Thursday 18th July 2024. This was spontaneous disorder where public order trained officers were withdrawn from their normal patrol and investigative duties putting significant pressure on the force and the officers involved. The de-briefing process for this incident is still taking place and I have been in regular contact with the Chief Constable on this matter in addition to an extraordinary paper at the Community Outcomes Meeting on 26th November 2024 where the public had the opportunity to ask questions.

I am assured that the appropriate structures are in place which ensure that in the event of future incidents, local risk assessments and contingency plans are in place, and the force has the capability to respond. I believe the plan to move responsibility for Local Resilience Forums to Mayoral Combined Authorities is also a positive step in this regard. I do however have concerns about the care given to PSU level 2 officers given the demands put on these individuals during such events, and we will be communicating with the force to ensure that we look at additional wellbeing support going forward.

Regards,

Alison Lowe,

Deputy Mayor of West Yorkshire for Policing and Crime



Our response to key recommendations in the inspection report

Recommendation 1: With immediate effect, the National Police Chiefs' Council and chief constables, working with the College of Policing and the Home Office, should create a plan and begin work to improve the police service's capacity and capability to respond to widespread violent disorder. They should plan to:

- in consultation with the Home Office, review the **public order public safety (POPS)**-related elements of the **Strategic Policing Requirement** and add relevant specialist capabilities, beginning with investigators and **intelligence** resources;
- complete a full assessment of the suitability and availability of personal protective equipment for all POPS trained **officers**, including mounted branches and dog units;
- make sure that every police force or region can rapidly deploy drones during POPS incidents;
- develop and provide guidance on the use of drones within the **College of Policing's POPS authorised professional practice**;
- review the range of available tactical options, equipment and technology to make sure officers can quickly and safely disperse people who take part in disorder; and
- review **POPS training** at all levels, including an assessment of the adequacy of the current fitness test for level 2 officers.

West Yorkshire response to recommendation 1:

There is a governance structure in place so that when strategic risk assessments are sent through from a national level, these feed into local risk assessments called Public Order-Public Safety Strategic risk assessments (POPS STRA). The force works with POPS trained officers to review capability and training on a regular basis and a refreshed aid memoir has been recently produced for officers so that if they are deployed rapidly, they can refer to up-to-date guidance on legislation.

West Yorkshire is one of 13 forces with mounted branch units. The Mounted section are trained in PSU Level 2 tactics, including specific Mounted Public Order tactics which are regularly practices and refreshed

West Yorkshire Police have the capability to deploy drones and are regularly used to get a better view of situations as they occur, however the force is waiting for national level guidance before implementing any changes. Similarly, the force will wait for national level guidance on the adequacy of the current fitness test for level 2 officers.

Recommendation 2: With immediate effect, the National Police Chiefs' Council and chief constables, working with the College of Policing, should create a plan and begin work to improve how the police service mobilises public order public safety (POPS) resources. They should plan to:

- give the National Police Chiefs' Council POPS lead (national co-ordinating gold commander) explicit authority to set the national strategy for **POPS**



[mobilisation](#), and full command and control of the deployment of tier 3 resources;

- improve the capacity and capability of all [regional information and co-ordination centres](#), including providing better guidance and a common operating framework;
- improve the technology available to the [National Police Coordination Centre](#), so that it can deploy and manage [mutual aid](#) more effectively and efficiently – the police service should be able to access information on the identity, number, location and nature of resources; skills available; length of deployments; and operational status of vehicles;
- prioritise a national structured debriefing process about the police response to disorder that supports rapid learning and improvement; and
- increase the police service's POPS [mobilisation](#) testing regime and take decisive action on its results.

West Yorkshire response to recommendation 2:

West Yorkshire Police has contingency plans in place which can be acted upon and officers deployed very quickly. There are formal and informal debriefing processes in place and dip sampling occurs to ensure this is happening consistently. In addition, debriefing processes for significant events are embedded and there will always be a formal debrief in place with a debrief trained officer.

Recommendation 3: With immediate effect, the National Police Chiefs' Council and chief constables, working with the College of Policing and the Home Office should create a plan and begin work to improve the well-being support the police service gives to its officers and staff. They should plan to:

- create formal protocols with ambulance services and hospital trusts for the treatment of police officers who are injured on duty;
- assess how [public order public safety](#) planning and [mobilisation](#), at force, regional and national levels, considers and prioritises the well-being of officers and staff, such as making sure they have access to food and drink, rest and rotation, personal protective equipment and toilet facilities;
- consider whether [public order public safety](#) roles should be defined as 'high risk', particularly in police forces that face frequent, extensive and severe disorder;
- review whether officers deployed in hostile incidents need additional support on a case-by-case basis; and
- examine the level of contribution that each police force, and the Home Office, makes to police treatment and well-being centres, so that all officers and staff who need treatment can access it.

West Yorkshire response to recommendation 3:

Through the PEEL assessment, it was highlighted that high workloads were affecting officers' well-being and their ability and capacity to investigate crime and carry out their role. A variety of well-being initiatives to help and support its officers and staff have been



implemented, which have been well received, but the inspectorate would like to see the force focus on supporting officers in high-risk roles, in particular officers identified as in need of additional support. Therefore, we know this is an area that needs consistent monitoring. The wellbeing of the workforce is vital and additional support should be given on a case-by-case basis subject to the scale of an event.

West Yorkshire Police have a number of officers who are trained in PSU Level 2 tactics and have this responsibility in addition to being a police officer. This can put demands on these individuals, particularly in terms of rest days and there needs to be a longer term look at the support provided to these officers. POPs officers do not routinely receive psychological assessments like other types of officers might, so it would be prudent to look at opportunities around improving debrief for these officers on a case-by-case basis.

Regular testing of capability and multi-agency exercises take place, particularly since the Manchester arena inquiry which has changed the way in which policing responds to major incidents and West Yorkshire have been thorough in implementing the recommendations of this report. The force has world class training facilities at Carr Gate near Wakefield which houses a public order arena and a multi-force POPs exercise is taking place on Friday 6th February.