

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01 ON THURSDAY 24 JULY 2025



PEEL 2023–25

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy

An inspection of South Yorkshire Police

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Overall summary

Our judgments

Our inspection assessed how good South Yorkshire Police is in nine areas of policing. We make graded judgments in eight of these nine as follows:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Preventing crime	Police powers and public treatment	Investigating crime	
		Responding to the public	Developing a positive workplace	
		Protecting vulnerable people		
		Managing offenders		
		Leadership and force management		

We also inspected how effective a service South Yorkshire Police gives to [victims](#) of crime. We don't make a graded judgment for this area.

We set out our detailed findings about things the force is doing well and where the force should improve in the rest of this report.

We also assess the force's performance in a range of other areas and we report on these separately. We make graded judgments for some of these areas.

Data in this report

For more information, please [view this report on our website](#) and select the 'About the data' section.

PEEL 2023–2025

In 2014, we introduced our police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections, which assess the performance of all 43 police forces in England and Wales. Since then, we have been continuously adapting our approach.

We have moved to a more [intelligence](#)-led, continual assessment approach, rather than the annual [PEEL inspections](#) we used in previous years. Forces are assessed against the characteristics of good performance, set out in the [PEEL Assessment Framework 2023–2025](#), and we more clearly link our judgments to [causes of concern](#) and [areas for improvement](#).

It isn't possible to make direct comparisons between the grades awarded in this PEEL inspection and those from the previous cycle of PEEL inspections. This is because we have increased our focus on making sure forces are achieving appropriate outcomes for the public, and in some cases we have changed the aspects of policing we inspect.

Terminology in this report

Our reports contain references to, among other things, 'national' definitions, priorities, policies, systems, responsibilities and processes.

In some instances, 'national' means applying to England or Wales, or England and Wales. In others, it means applying to England, Wales and Scotland, or the whole of the United Kingdom.

HM Inspector's summary

I am pleased with some aspects of the performance of South Yorkshire Police in keeping people safe, reducing crime and providing [victims](#) with an effective service. I am satisfied with most other aspects of the force's performance, but there are areas in which it needs to improve.

South Yorkshire Police receives a similar level of funding to other forces in England and Wales, although the council tax local police [precept](#) is lower. But this funding isn't bringing about a good service for the public in some important areas, such as investigating crimes.

Within the South Yorkshire Police area, 22.7 percent of neighbourhoods were in the top 10 percent most deprived for employment across England and Wales, and 19.2 percent of neighbourhoods were in the top 10 percent most deprived for household income.

The force receives more emergency 999 and non-emergency [101](#) calls per 1,000 population than the England and Wales average. The force now answers most 999 calls quickly and within the expected standard, although performance data shows that in the year ending 31 December 2024 it was below the expected standard for forces. The force doesn't always respond to calls for service as quickly as it should. While the force has tried to address this issue, it needs to do more to meet the public's needs.

It is clear that the force is committed to neighbourhood policing and is continuing to invest in its neighbourhood policing model. It has developed a range of initiatives designed to provide early intervention and to prevent and deter crime. It has a strong evidence-based policing (EBP) ethos that is clear across all of its functions.

South Yorkshire Police needs to improve the way it investigates crime. A low number of crimes are solved following investigation. The force needs to work to understand the reasons for this and to achieve better outcomes for victims. It also needs to make sure that it remains victim focused throughout investigations and regularly updates victims.

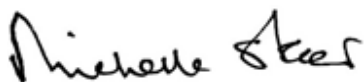
During our inspection we found that high workloads were affecting [officers'](#) well-being and their ability to investigate crime. I recognise the efforts of individual officers and [staff](#) in South Yorkshire Police, who are clearly working hard to manage high workloads and to help victims. The force needs to make sure it has effective systems and it uses them consistently to monitor workloads and to provide support to officers.

The force makes good use of [stop and search](#). And it records reasonable grounds for the search in almost all cases. External scrutiny of stop and search is good, but the force would benefit from gathering data from its supervisory reviews to improve analysis and further development. The force has more work to do to improve its officers' recording of use of force and to improve supervisor scrutiny.

South Yorkshire Police faces many challenges. In the year leading up to our inspection, the force had experienced significant disorder following the Southport murders. And it was one of the forces that we examined in [our 2024 inspection into the police response to the public disorder](#) experienced across several forces. I recognise the effect that these events had on the ability of the force to provide sufficient resourcing for both the subsequent investigation and maintaining policing services across South Yorkshire. And there was obviously a significant effect on the officers who responded to the disorder.

The force also faces significant financial challenges because of accounting issues reported by the South Yorkshire Mayor during 2024. I recognise the work that the force has already carried out to address this issue. But it is clear that it has affected the force's ability to police the communities of South Yorkshire, and will continue to do so.

I hope that changes to the way the force operates will result in improvements that help it better meet the public's needs. I will be monitoring its progress closely.



Michelle Skeer

HM Inspector of Constabulary

Leadership

Using the [College of Policing leadership standards](#) as a framework, in this section we set out the most important findings relating to the force's leadership at all levels.

South Yorkshire Police develops leadership skills at all levels. Officers and staff entering leadership roles for the first time and supervisors beginning more strategic roles receive support and training. All leaders also receive training on cultural awareness and inclusion.

[Chief officers](#) and other senior leaders could be more visible to the workforce and make more effort to understand the demands and challenges faced by all [personnel](#). Some officers and staff feel disconnected from the leadership team and think that senior officers don't fully understand their concerns or well-being needs.

The force could improve governance processes in some areas. There are very different ways of working between districts of the force. This has resulted in inefficiencies and inconsistency of service to the public. The force isn't adequately resourcing some areas of high demand, which is creating high workloads and delays for victims. Senior leaders should have clear oversight of workloads and make sure that they are manageable.

The force uses a wide range of data and analytics to predict future demand and challenges. But it needs to upgrade some of its systems so it can produce quality data that better informs force activity.

The force has placed a strong focus on answering calls and responding to incidents quickly. But it also needs to focus on improving the quality of its response and subsequent investigations. It should make sure that investigations are supervised effectively, with supervisors making sure that officers use all investigative opportunities to achieve better outcomes for victims.

More detail on South Yorkshire Police's leadership is included in the main body of the report.

Reducing crime assessment

The reducing crime assessment sets out what South Yorkshire Police is doing to reduce crime and how effective this action is. This assessment doesn't include police recorded crime figures. This is because they can be affected by variations and changes in recording policy and practice, making it difficult to draw comparisons over time.

The force's [neighbourhood policing teams](#) work closely with partner organisations to prevent and deter crime through effective problem-solving. This helps it develop long-term, sustainable plans to find the root cause of repeat problems and to make changes that will benefit communities. And the force uses data effectively to understand future demands and challenges.

The vast majority of recorded grounds for stop and search are reasonable. This helps the force reduce crime. But the force could do more to understand and improve the way that it uses stop and search through analysis and monitoring.

The force needs to improve the quality of its investigations. It should also make sure that investigators have enough capacity for them to achieve more positive outcomes for victims. Supervisors need to give direction to investigations and make sure all reasonable lines of enquiry are pursued.

More detail on what South Yorkshire Police is doing to reduce crime is included in the main body of the report.

Providing a service to victims of crime

Victim service assessment

This section describes our assessment of the service South Yorkshire Police provides to victims. This is from the point of reporting a crime and throughout the investigation. As part of this assessment, we reviewed 100 case files.

When the police close a case of a reported crime, they assign it an [outcome type](#). This describes the reason for closing it.

We selected 100 cases to review, including at least 20 that the force had closed with the following outcomes:

- When a suspect was identified but there were evidential difficulties and the victim didn't support or withdrew their support for police action.
- When the force applied a temporary outcome before finalisation.

Although our victim service assessment is ungraded, it influences graded judgments in the other areas we have inspected.

The force identifies repeat and vulnerable victims, but it needs to improve the time it takes to answer emergency/non-emergency calls

The force needs to improve the time it takes to answer emergency calls. It also needs to reduce the number of non-emergency calls that are abandoned before they are answered. The force uses a structured process that assesses [threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement \(THRIVE\)](#), but it doesn't always record the vulnerability of the caller. Call handlers identify repeat victims. This means that they are aware of the victim's circumstances when considering what response they should give. Call handlers are polite but don't always give victims advice on crime prevention or how to preserve evidence.

The force doesn't always respond promptly to calls for service

On most occasions, the force responds to calls for service appropriately, but it doesn't always record appropriate [risk assessments](#) for victims. The force doesn't always respond within set time limits and doesn't always inform victims of delays, meaning that it doesn't always meet victims' expectations. This may cause victims to lose confidence and disengage from the process.

The force doesn't always carry out effective or timely investigations

The force doesn't always carry out investigations in a timely way or complete all relevant and proportionate lines of enquiry. The force doesn't always supervise investigations well, but it does regularly update victims. Victims are more likely to have confidence in a police investigation when they receive regular updates.

A thorough investigation increases the likelihood of perpetrators being identified and arrested, which provides a positive end result for the victim.

The [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime \('the Victims' Code'\)](#) requires forces to carry out a needs assessment at an early stage to determine whether victims need extra support. The force doesn't always carry out this assessment or record the request for extra support.

The force doesn't always assign the right outcome type, and it does consider victims wishes but doesn't always hold an auditable record of those wishes

The force doesn't always close crimes with the appropriate outcome type. It mostly records a clear rationale for using a certain outcome, but this isn't always effectively supervised. It asks victims for their views when deciding which outcome type to assign to a closed investigation. It also considers the offender's background. But it doesn't always make an auditable record of the victim's wishes when required. The force informs victims of what outcome code it has assigned to the investigation.

Police powers and treating the public fairly and respectfully

Adequate

South Yorkshire Police is adequate at using police powers and treating people fairly and respectfully.

Areas for improvement

The force should make sure that it records and analyses its reviews of stop and search and use of force

The force doesn't gather information from supervisors' reviews of [stop and search](#) and use of force. Information about the quality of each interaction would help the force to better understand its use of powers. This could help improve [officers'](#) performance and increase public confidence as a result.

Sergeants are required to review all of their officers' stop and search and use of force records. They carry out the reviews by looking at both the written reports and the [body-worn video](#) footage. But the records of these reviews contain very limited information about what the reviewer found and the quality of the interaction. The force should make sure that supervisor reviews record enough information to allow the force to identify trends or patterns of behaviour across the workforce.

The force holds internal scrutiny panels for both stop and search and use of force every four to six weeks. These panels of officers from across the force review both the written records and the body-worn video for randomly selected cases. As a group they note their review of how the officers performed and any good or poor behaviours. These notes are given to the officers involved and used to identify training needs for the whole force. The force told us that during 2024 it reviewed 32 stop and search and 48 use of force incidents in this way.

While the internal panel provides a detailed review of incidents, the number it examines is too small for the force to understand how effective and fair officers are when interacting with people. If the force made sure its sergeants recorded the findings from their reviews of both stop and search and use of force in more detail, it could have much greater confidence that officers are using their powers correctly.

The force should improve the information that it gives to the public regarding how its officers use force or apply their stop and search powers

The force doesn't have enough information on its website to allow the public to understand how it uses [stop and search](#) and use of force powers. Publishing data that includes whether there is any [disproportionality](#) in how a force uses its powers, and any identified reasons for it, helps inform the public about whether the force is using its powers fairly and ethically. This is important for public confidence.

For example, Black and ethnic minority individuals make up 17.5 percent of all use of force incidents. But they only make up 14.4 percent of arrests and 12.3 percent of the population. This could indicate that force is used disproportionately more frequently on people from ethnic minority backgrounds. The force should investigate possible reasons for this and publish the results on its website.

The force publishes its stop and search data on the [Police.uk](#) website, which contains open data about crime and policing in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. But the information provided there is limited. The force should make sure that it publishes clear information with explanations that the public can understand to better explain any disproportionality in the use of police powers.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to police powers and treating people fairly and respectfully.

The force trains its officers to effectively work with the public

The force provides a range of training to its workforce. This includes how to communicate respectfully and to treat people fairly. Student officers and neighbourhood officers receive training on cultural awareness and working with people. This helps officers to better understand the communities they work in and to improve their skills in communicating with the public. During our inspection, we found that officers value this training. But some told us that they would also like training that focused on the specific communities they work with. The force should make sure that all frontline officers and staff receive cultural awareness training throughout their service, and that it is relevant to the communities they work with.

The force has a clear policy on the use of body-worn video (BWV). The policy explains how and when officers should use BWV to gather evidence and promote transparency. This helps to improve trust and confidence within the community. We found that officers use BWV in most relevant incidents. The force told us that between 1 October and 31 December 2024, officers activated their BWV 97 percent of the time when using their stop and search powers, and in 92 percent of incidents when they used force.

Officers receive scenario-based stop and search training during their student officer courses. They then attend [continuing professional development](#) courses known as Street Skills, which regularly include stop and search and use of force updates and guidance. The force also gives regular 'Operational Update' communications which identify best practice and any changes to legislation or procedure. During our inspection, the force introduced mandatory stop and search 'bite-sized' video updates. These gave clear guidance on powers, reasonable grounds for search and the supervision of stop and search. Officers told us they found these informative and helpful.

All operational officers within the force receive public personal safety training every 12 months. The force reviews this training regularly, and includes scenarios designed to give officers realistic experience of situations they may have to deal with. Officers are trained in how to use the [national decision model](#). This guides officers in making ethical and lawful decisions during both spontaneous and planned events.

At the time of our inspection, 141 officers had not completed the refresher training within the 12-month period. [College of Policing](#) guidance is that an officer shouldn't be deployed in operational roles if they haven't had their safety training refreshed. But South Yorkshire Police allowed officers who hadn't updated their training to be deployed in operational roles for up to four months. This meant that that all refresher training could be completed without reducing its ability to deal with operational demand. The number of frontline officers who required the four-month extension was low. But the force should make sure that this situation doesn't happen again and that all officers receive refresher training in the required 12-month period.

The force uses stop and search powers fairly and respectfully

During our inspection, we reviewed a sample of 275 stop and search records from 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024. Based on this sample, we estimate that 92.4 percent (+/- 3.1 percentage points) of all stop and searches by the force during this period had reasonable grounds recorded.

This is an improvement compared with the findings from our previous review of records from 1 January to 31 December 2021, when we found that only 76.0 percent (+/- 6.4 percentage points) of stop and searches had reasonable grounds recorded.

Of the records we reviewed for stop and searches on people who self-identified as from an ethnic minority background, 59 of 64 records had reasonable grounds recorded.

Our review of BWV from stop and search incidents found that officers usually carried out fair and effective searches. But officers rarely told the person searched how they could get a record of the search. They are entitled to this so it should always be provided.

In the year ending 31 March 2024, South Yorkshire Police carried out 12,292 stop and searches on people and vehicles. This was a 3.5 percent decrease compared to the previous year. And it represented 7.4 stop and searches per 1,000 population, which is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. During this period, based on population data from the 2021 Census, Black people were 2.8 times more likely to be stopped and searched than White people in South Yorkshire. This is compared to 3.6 times more likely across England and Wales.

All frontline officers receive mandatory stop and search training, and we found that most officers are confident and proactive in using this power. Although some response officers told us that they felt they didn't have time to carry out proactive searches due to high levels of demand.

In the year ending 31 March 2024, the force found linked items in 22.5 percent of stop and search encounters. This is where the officers found a stolen or prohibited item that was linked to the reason for the search. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales, for which the average rate is 25.1 percent. This slightly lower rate may be a result of some officers feeling unable to carry out proactive searches. The force told us that it has worked to improve this linked [find rate](#). And that between 1 April and 31 December 2024 it had risen to 23.4 percent. The force should continue to improve in this area and to encourage officers to carry out proactive searches.

The force uses external scrutiny of stop and search and use of force to inform training

The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority uses an independent ethics panel (IEP). Its role is to oversee the ethical standards of South Yorkshire Police. The IEP works with the force to set up and monitor external scrutiny panels for stop and search, use of force and taser use.

The three panels meet every four to six weeks and review around six to eight cases in each two-hour meeting. The panels review the officers' records and the related BWV footage. Panel members give written feedback using an online questionnaire and verbal feedback during a group discussion of each meeting. During our inspection, we observed these panels and found the feedback to be detailed and intrusive, challenging poor practice and praising good.

Panel members are volunteers from the community who responded to adverts and community events. We found the panels to be diverse in age, gender and ethnicity. Some of the panels had an independent chair, and others were guided by police officers, but they were all directed by the panel members. The panels were well informed, and we were told that most members had observed police training courses relevant to their panel.

Feedback from panels is used to identify patterns of behaviour and improve officer training. During our inspection, we saw a use of force panel give feedback regarding de-escalation opportunities. This resulted in the force giving advice to all operational police officers to remind them to consider de-escalation strategies. This advice used the video footage that the panel had viewed and referred directly to comments made by the panel members.

All officers whose incidents are randomly selected for scrutiny at a panel are given individual feedback. Both the officer and their supervisor receive written feedback. We spoke to several officers who had received such feedback, and they welcomed it. Some officers told us that it had caused them to behave differently in later incidents.

The IEP reviews the outcomes from these panels and force performance data relating to both stop and search and use of force. It refers trends and patterns of behaviour to the relevant training staff to help improve performance.

The force doesn't always record when officers use force

In the year ending 31 March 2024, the force recorded 12,275 use of force incidents. Based on the number of arrests made over the same period, this is 12,603 incidents fewer than estimated. Or 49.3 percent of the expected number of use of force incidents.

The force told us that it was aware that officers don't always record when they used force in the course of their duties. It has put in place more training and reminders to officers and staff to complete use of force reports. This has included placing dedicated laptops in custody suites and telling officers to complete use of force reports before leaving the unit. The force told us that it saw an increase in use of force reporting as a result. In the year ending 31 March 2025, it recorded 80 percent of the expected volume of reports as compared to the total number of arrests. And between 1 January and 31 March 2025 this had increased to 83 percent. While this is an improvement, the force needs to do more to increase reporting levels to help it to understand how its officers are using force.

In the year ending 31 March 2024, within the South Yorkshire Police area the proportion of use of force incidents resulting in an injury to the person involved was 8.0 percent. This was higher than expected for forces in England and Wales, which had an average rate of 4.4 percent. The proportion of use of force incidents resulting in officer injury was 6.9 percent. This was also higher than expected for forces in England and Wales, for which the average is 3.8 percent. The force told us that it

believed that officers were over-recording injuries. This belief was based on its own [dip sampling](#) and focus groups. It then clarified the definition of injuries related to use of force in force training days. Between 1 January and the 31 March 2025, the force told us that recorded injuries to people involved in use of force incidents had fallen to 4.1 percent.

The force doesn't always record the ethnicity of people who are subject to stop and search or use of force

The force told us that officers don't always record people's ethnicity when carrying out stop and search activity or when they have used force.

When completing stop and search or use of force records, officers should enter the self-defined ethnicity and the officer-defined ethnicity of the person searched. The self-defined ethnicity can only be obtained by asking people what ethnicity they identify as. While not everyone is willing to answer this, it is expected that most will be. In our review of BWV of stop and search incidents, we found that officers don't always record the ethnicity of the person searched. The force has identified this as an area it needs to improve and has introduced more training and information for officers.

The force is carrying out a 'Fair Treatment Project'. This examines proportionality and procedural fairness across all its policing activities. When looking at stop and search, it found that 20 percent of reports didn't include the person's self-defined ethnicity. The stop and search survey we carried out during our inspection identified that over a 12-month period, 18.8 percent of the records we examined didn't record the person's self-defined ethnicity. And our BWV review of stop and search cases found that nine times out of ten, officers didn't ask for the person's self-defined ethnicity.

The project team carried out a survey of officers who hadn't recorded self-defined ethnicity on their use of force reports. The results showed that 55 percent of respondents said they forgot to ask for the data, 15 percent didn't think it was relevant and 35 percent were reluctant to ask. Not having accurate data affects the force's ability to understand disproportionality and explain to the public why it is happening.

The force has put measures in place to improve the recording of self-defined ethnicity. It has changed the use of force and stop and search reporting app so that if self-defined ethnicity isn't recorded, the officer must give the reason why. And sergeants receive an automated email when one of their officers submits a report. The email reminds them to check that the self-defined ethnicity was recorded. Force training days also remind officers and supervisors how important it is to complete this part of the report. The force told us that the reporting rate for self-defined ethnicity improved due to these changes. Between 1 January and 28 February 2025, 86 percent of reports contained this information. This is an increase from 80 percent of reports made during 2024. But the force should do more to make sure that officers record people's ethnicity in line with its own policy.

Preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability

Good

South Yorkshire Police is good at prevention and deterrence.

Promising practice

The force uses audio messaging within streaming services to provide targeted crime prevention advice

The force has carried out a trial of targeted digital advertising to give crime prevention information within areas identified as burglary hotspots. It delivered the messages via audio streaming services and podcasts downloaded within specific postcode areas. The messages told listeners that they were in a burglary hotspot area, gave simple crime prevention advice and told them where they could get more information to reduce the risk of becoming a [victim](#) of crime.

The force carried out an early evaluation of the trial, in which it found that the messages reached 29,969 people in 12 weeks. This represents 30 percent of the target population. And there were 410,334 individual streams, which equates to 13.6 plays of the message per person. Hearing the information multiple times helped to reinforce the message.

This messaging was part of the force's residential burglary initiative, Operation Hawkeye. The initiative also includes [officers](#) carrying out crime prevention visits within high-crime areas. After the audio messaging campaign, officers who carried out these visits told us that a high proportion of the residents had either listened to or been told about the streaming messages by friends or relatives.

There has been a reduction in residential burglaries within the hotspot areas that the operation focused on. At the time of our inspection, the force was carrying out an evaluation of Operation Hawkeye and the audio messaging through its partnership with a local university. It plans to use the same tactic in other high-crime situations, such as targeting users of the night-time economy and students during freshers' week.

The force supports the families of people with dementia by using GPS devices to help locate their relatives should they go missing

The force's 'Saving lives with GPS' project was developed by the police search co-ordinator. The initiative gives GPS tracker devices to the relatives of people with dementia who are at risk of going missing. The initiative aims to reassure families, while reducing the risk of harm to people with dementia and related demand on the emergency services. This project arose out of the [officer's](#) personal knowledge of both the resources and effort required to find and [safeguard](#) people with dementia who go missing, and the effect that such episodes have on their relatives.

The officer presented his idea to the force and secured funding to carry out a trial with 50 GPS trackers. The force sought legal advice to make sure that the aim of saving lives was balanced against individual privacy. The trials involved mental health experts and academics. These showed both the practical benefits of the initiative and the reassurance that family members received knowing their loved ones had this support.

The four South Yorkshire local authorities gave further support and funding, and the initiative was rolled out across the force. Findings from evaluation reviews clearly show a reduction in the police and partner agency time devoted to such incidents. Family members who accept the offer of a device also have access to mobile phone apps to track their relative. As a result, most missing episodes are quickly resolved, without any police involvement, as the family locate the person themselves.

The project won the 2024 Tilley Awards for problem-solving at the national problem-solving conference in October 2024. And several other forces have introduced similar projects after receiving guidance from South Yorkshire Police.

The force has further developed its scenario-based learning facility to work with young people and other community groups, providing crime prevention and awareness

In our [last PEEL inspection report](#), we commented on the South Yorkshire Lifewise Centre. The force and its partner organisations have since expanded on this provision to provide training on subjects related to force and national initiatives.

The training provided includes ‘Guns and knives take lives’, which aims to educate school pupils regarding the dangers of carrying and using weapons. And ‘Your life your choice’, which warns of the dangers associated with gangs and other organised crime groups.

The presentations are given by volunteers and partner organisations, such as Magistrates in the Community, the Safer Roads Partnership and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. The centre has film-set style environments that include street scenes, police stations, courts, hospitals and houses. The centre supports communities from across South Yorkshire with school pupils drawn from a range of year groups attending most days.

The force reviews the sessions that it provides in line with local and national priorities. Since our last inspection, there has been a greater focus on preventing knife crime and organised crime gangs for school-aged [children](#). And tackling fraud and doorstep crime for older groups. The facility also gives help and advice to asylum seeker groups and serves as a training venue for police volunteers, such as the special constabulary, cadets and the mini police.

During our inspection, we saw how the sessions were guided by police community support officers who worked in the areas that the school pupils and other groups came from. They built on relationships and trust already established with the groups to lead them through the different crime prevention scenarios and to make sure the key messages were understood.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to prevention and deterrence.

The force has a neighbourhood policing model that focuses on prevention of crime, antisocial behaviour and vulnerability

The force shows a commitment to neighbourhood policing. There is an established governance structure for neighbourhood policing, with a superintendent lead who reports to the assistant chief constable responsible for local policing. The force has introduced a Neighbourhood Policing Strategy for 2024–26 that aligns with [College of Policing guidance](#).

The force set up a neighbourhood policing board to improve neighbourhood policing across the force. It meets monthly to discuss the force's approach to problem-solving, working with people, and the other strands of neighbourhood policing. The board oversees the strategy, but at the time of our inspection it didn't use measurable outcomes to put any changes in place. This is done at the district level. The force would benefit from measuring neighbourhood policing outcomes at a strategic level.

Each district of the force has neighbourhood policing teams (NPTs) and a safer neighbourhood services team. These are teams of officers and staff that work closely with local authority partners. Some teams are located in local authority premises, but they all work with local authority staff. The teams aim to reduce the effects of crime and disorder using EBP and problem-solving. They also aim to address concerns such as [hate crime](#), [missing persons](#) and [antisocial behaviour](#).

During our inspection, we found that neighbourhood officers were committed to their roles and were well supervised. Their workloads were usually appropriate, but some NPT officers told us that they were frustrated by being regularly diverted away from their core role. They told us that on weekends they were often taken from problem-solving or working with the community to deal with prisoners arrested by response officers. And that this rarely had any relevance to their duties or even their place of work.

The force has an abstraction policy, which states when officers may be diverted from their main duties. But it accepts that while the policy is complied with, it doesn't have accurate records of the extent to which NPT officers are being diverted from their core role. The force is working to more accurately define and record abstraction.

In the year ending 31 March 2024, the force recorded 26,059 incidents of antisocial behaviour, which equates to 18.5 incidents per 1,000 population. This is within the normal range expected for forces in England and Wales. And it is similar to those recorded in previous years, with 25,058 incidents recorded in the year ending 31 March 2023, and 27,322 incidents recorded in the year ending 31 March 2022.

South Yorkshire Police understands and shows a long-term commitment to problem-solving and EBP

The force maximises opportunities to prevent public harm and reduce demand by using problem-solving techniques within neighbourhood policing. Officers use recognised models and the force records problem-solving on its systems.

The force has developed a range of information and resources to help its workforce to carry out problem-solving. The Neighbourhood Portal includes a 'what works' toolkit, an interventions catalogue and a targeted activity toolkit. It also contains the problem-solving portal, which stores all of the force's problem-solving plans in a searchable format. During our inspection we reviewed several of the plans and found most of them to be comprehensive and of good quality. They had evidence of joint problem-solving work with partner organisations, such as local authorities, health and

social services and housing providers. They also had regular supervisory oversight. The plans involved interventions and actions, resulting in positive outcomes, such as obtaining civil orders, criminal convictions and reductions in antisocial behaviour.

The force has developed a quality review process for its problem-solving plans. Inspectors from neighbourhood policing review plans and comment against set criteria.

The force uses Power BI software to present neighbourhood data dashboards. And NPTs access the force's operational self-briefing tool that provides incident and investigation data by ward area. This helps officers and staff to complete their own analysis in support of their problem-solving. Analysts provide more advanced support if required.

The force holds monthly problem-solving webinars. These allow officers and staff to find out more about the force's problem-solving work. And they can learn how to use problem-oriented policing in their work to achieve positive outcomes and increase public confidence. The webinars allow officers and staff to share knowledge and good practice, while also raising awareness of the problem-solving support that they can access.

The force applies EBP principles. It has an EBP board that meets quarterly and whose members include representatives from academic partners. The force also hosts an annual Evidence-Based Policing Conference in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University. Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship student officers are required to complete an academic research project using EBP principles and present it at either the conference or to the board.

During our inspection, we saw that force-wide initiatives were founded on EBP principles. The force's approaches to homicide prevention, residential burglary and violence reduction all used EBP concepts. And the force has made repeated, successful bids to the Home Office Safer Streets Fund to tackle neighbourhood crime and antisocial behaviour that relied on evidence-based proposals.

The force's implementation of the Home Office's antisocial behaviour response programme is effective and improving performance

In March 2023, the Home Office introduced its ['Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan'](#). This aimed to restore public confidence that antisocial behaviour would be quickly and visibly addressed. The plan involved increased numbers of uniformed officers to clamp down on antisocial behaviour, identifying and targeting hotspots. South Yorkshire Police was selected as one of ten pilot areas to use hotspot policing to tackle both antisocial behaviour and serious violence.

To respond to this effectively, the force invested in enhanced problem-oriented policing (POP) training for officers and staff within its Hotspot Response Hub (HRH). The team sergeant and analyst have both completed an eight-month 'Most Serious Violence POP Champions' course at University College London (UCL). This makes them some of the most highly accredited POP officers in England and Wales. The team sergeant is the force's problem-solving champion and supports other teams and personnel across the force. The force told us that it has helped a further 57 officers to complete the UCL's POP online course.

The HRH's POP champions produce detailed POP+ plans for each of the hotspot areas based on in-depth analysis. These then form the basis of the patrols. The HRH determines when and where officers and staff patrol the identified hotspot areas. They are required to carry out foot-patrol in those areas for at least 20 minutes, and to log their activity on the Visibeat app which tracks their movements.

Between October 2024 and March 2025, the hotspot areas were patrolled twice a day 91 percent of the time. And during those patrols, officers made 142 arrests, carried out 210 stop searches and submitted 188 intelligence reports. The force presented its results to the Home Office, which identified South Yorkshire Police as an "exemplar force".

The force could do more to work with the communities of South Yorkshire

The force isn't working as effectively with its communities as it could. It makes good use of [independent advisory groups \(IAGs\)](#) to help it to understand local feelings and concerns. There is one IAG attached to each of the four districts of the force, and they are made up of volunteers from local communities. The force also has an IAG made up of [domestic abuse](#) and violence survivors to advise it regarding matters relating to violence against women and girls.

The force carries out 'your voice counts' public surveys to inform local priorities. And it holds police and communities together (PACT) meetings in partnership with local authorities. Community members complete surveys on the problems they face and what they feel police priorities should be. Neighbourhood officers then tell communities about their policing activities targeting those issues. To gather feedback from users of transport hubs, the force uses posters asking people to complete a short survey that they can access using a QR code.

The force uses a free messaging service called SYP Alerts to share important news and information through smartphones and other devices. The alerts include local information, the results of enforcement operations, future events and the location of pop-up police stations. But the system that the force uses doesn't have as much functionality as similar systems used by other police forces. For example, the communication is one-way, so the public can't talk to the force using the system. And translated content is not available for people who don't speak English as a first language.

The force is aware that it needs to gather more information from its communities. It is exploring using hybrid part in-person, part online PACT meetings and two-way communication through technology. This would give it a greater understanding of community issues and challenges.

The force could make better use of volunteers to make communities safer

The force has a [citizens in policing](#) lead who encourages and supports members of the public to function as volunteers in roles across South Yorkshire. They oversee the special constabulary, police cadets and police support volunteers.

When we inspected the force, we were told it had 70 special constables, but had in previous years maintained a special constabulary of around 200. The force plans to increase this to around 100 special constables, but it is unclear how it will achieve this. Some special constables also receive specialist training such as public order, method-of-entry training or driving courses.

The force has a popular police cadet programme which at the time of our inspection was at its capacity of 120 cadets and had a waiting list. The cadets regularly help NPTs at community events and on test-purchasing operations. The force told us that the cadet cohort is diverse and that it has directed recruitment towards under-represented groups within South Yorkshire. The force also has a mini-police project that works with year 5 pupils over the school year. Selected pupils become mini-police officers and are trained on safety issues and messages which they then give to their schools. The force sees both the cadets and mini-police as good ways to work with communities. We were told that schools were chosen for these initiatives based on factors such as them being within areas that had experienced recent knife crime or disorder issues.

During our inspection, the force told us that there were 35 other police service volunteers in various roles across the force. Most of these were based within the Lifewise Centre. They included cadet leaders, former magistrates and staff in administrative roles. Other volunteer roles within the force included vehicle examiners, fleet maintenance assistants and staff who recover dash cam footage from witnesses.

Officers and staff across the force told us that they would like to see greater use of police service volunteers within specialist roles such as cybercrime, public contact, financial crime and rural crime. They told us that they saw the benefits of bringing in volunteers with specialist skills to assist police officers and staff. But there was a reluctance within the force to explore such volunteer involvement.

The force could make greater use of volunteers, both within the special constabulary and in specialist roles. This would help the force work with the community and provide support for police officers and staff. Volunteers in specialist areas can provide forces with much needed skills and experience that would otherwise not be available to them.

Responding to the public

Adequate

South Yorkshire Police is adequate at responding to the public.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to make sure that call takers give appropriate advice on preserving evidence and preventing crime

Not all [victims](#) are given advice on preventing crime or preserving evidence when they contact the force. This may lead to the loss of evidence that could support an investigation, and the force missing opportunities to prevent further crimes against the victim.

We identified this as an [area for improvement](#) in [our last PEEL inspection](#) of the force. The force has worked to address this, introducing an improved quality assessment process with quicker, focused feedback to [officers](#) and [staff](#), training and visual reminders within the [control room](#). But in our victim service assessment, we found that call handlers gave appropriate advice about preserving evidence in only 26 of the 35 relevant cases we reviewed. And that call handlers gave appropriate advice about crime prevention in only 32 of 38 relevant cases.

Force trainers and crime scene investigators gives call takers training and guidance about evidence preservation. Call handlers also receive training on how to provide appropriate crime prevention advice. And to reinforce this information, call handlers also send a link to a video that gives more detailed prevention and preservation guidance. But the force needs to do more to make sure that all callers receive helpful and appropriate advice when contacting the police.

The force needs to attend calls for service in line with its published attendance times and make sure that callers are updated if there is a delay in attendance

The force doesn't always attend calls for service in line with its published attendance times. In our victim service assessment, we found that attendance was within the required time in only 35 of the 64 relevant cases we reviewed (whether the incident was downgraded or not). There was effective and appropriate supervision of that response in only 13 of 39 cases. And we found evidence of the caller being updated regarding a delay in only 16 of 29 relevant cases.

Delayed response to incidents can lead to missed opportunities to [safeguard](#) victims and collect evidence. It can also have a negative effect on [victims'](#) confidence.

To address these issues, the force has a response hub within the [control room](#). This enhances its service to victims by dealing with incidents over the phone or via a video call. The force has also introduced an escalation policy (used when officers and staff identify that a target response time may be missed) to maximise opportunities to quickly respond to calls for service. The force also has a new diary appointment system it uses when appropriate and in line with the caller's wishes.

The force told us that attendance times are improving as a result. We will continue to monitor this performance, making sure it is sustained. But the force should still make efforts to improve supervision and to update callers from the control room.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force responds to the public.

South Yorkshire Police has a good management, daily governance and performance structure in place for its force control room

During our inspection, we found that the force holds daily management meetings that review force control room (FCR) performance and how officers and staff have responded to incidents over the previous 24 hours. Daily performance reports allow senior leaders to understand all aspects of demand. The force monitors personnel numbers, both within the FCR and those available to respond to calls for assistance from the public, to make sure that there are enough staff and officers on duty. The force also continuously recruits officers and staff for the force contact centre so that it is always over-resourced and there are no gaps in service.

There is oversight of the performance of the FCR by chief officers of the force who make sure that the leadership team manages resources, training and quality assurance in order to meet current and future demand.

The force gives its control room officers and staff comprehensive training and quality assurance

New control room officers and staff complete a 12-week course where they are trained to use force applications, carry out risk assessments and to communicate effectively with callers. A personal tutor then guides them through the process of receiving and responding to calls from the public. Only when they are deemed fully competent are they able to work within the FCR.

The FCR quality assurance team supervises and reviews the work of all FCR personnel. This team reviews calls made within the last 48 hours, listens to the call recording and reviews the actions of the call takers to make sure they are giving the right support to the public. During our inspection, we saw how the information that the quality assurance team gathered was used to both give individual officers and staff members additional training and to influence the FCR training programme as a whole.

FCR officers and staff have regular continuing professional development training. We saw that this training kept officers and staff up to date with legal changes and national guidance. We also found evidence that officers and staff were given training from subject matter experts. One example of this was a training course for call takers, provided by the force's violence against women and girls lead. This trained officers and staff to recognise victims of domestic abuse who contacted the police, and how to provide the correct advice and police response. This 'I made the call' training package was developed with help from domestic abuse survivors and featured their voices and stories.

The public of South Yorkshire can contact the force through a range of appropriate, accessible channels

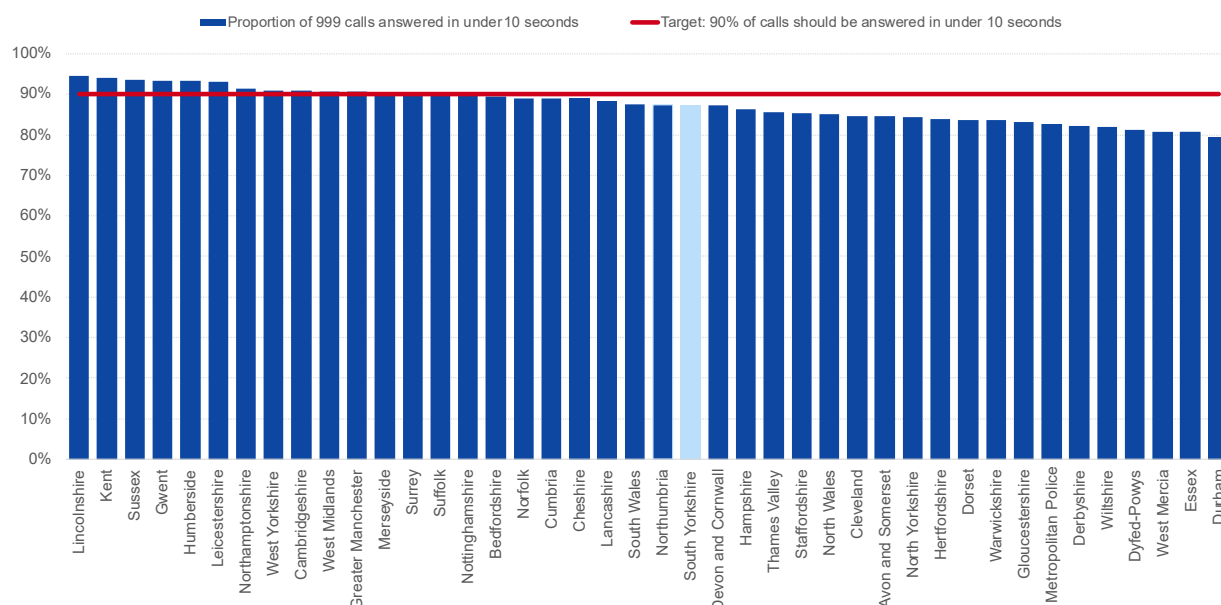
Members of the public can contact the force through various channels that it constantly monitors. In addition to 999 and 101 telephone calls, the public can contact it through the force's Webex chat service. They can also report crimes through email, text chat, social media channels or via the force's single online home crime report. During our inspection, we assessed all of the contact channels and found them to be continuously monitored. And there were no backlogs or queues.

The force provides a timely service to members of the public who contact it using the 999 system

In the year ending 31 December 2024, the force received 187 calls to 999 per 1,000 population. This was in line with the average for all forces in England and Wales.

In the year ending 31 December 2024, the force answered 87.2 percent of their 999 calls within 10 seconds. This is below the expected national standard of 90 percent of calls answered within 10 seconds. The force amended procedures within the FCR at the end of 2024. BT data for the months of November 2024 to February 2025 shows that over 90 percent of 999 calls were answered in under 10 seconds in each of those months.

Figure 1: Proportion of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds by forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 December 2024



Source: 999 performance data from BT

Note: Call answering time is the time taken for a call to be transferred from BT to a force and then answered by that force.

Call handlers carry out meaningful structured assessments

During our inspection, we found that call handlers were professional and polite when dealing with the public. Using our victim service assessment, we concluded that they acted appropriately and ethically and used clear unambiguous language without bias in all 68 of the relevant cases we reviewed.

When answering calls for service, FCR officers and staff complete a risk assessment examining THRIVE criteria. We found that call handlers used a structured triage approach to assess risk and consider the needs of the victim or the caller in 81 of the 83 cases we reviewed. The structured triage record was an accurate and meaningful reflection of the circumstances of the call in 74 of 81 cases examined.

From our victim service assessment audit, we determined that call takers carried out a check to identify a repeat victim, to inform the risk assessment, in 74 of 78 relevant cases. And that when a repeat victim was identified, the information gathered was used effectively in 36 of 40 cases. The identification of repeat victims is important for accurately assessing the level of risk.

In our victim service assessment, we found that the initial grading of the call wasn't always appropriate. The grading was appropriate in 71 of the 85 calls audited. However, during our inspection we found that supervisors carried out checks and made necessary changes to make sure calls were graded correctly. This supervision meant that callers were given the correct response and in a timely manner. This was confirmed by the victim service assessment, in which we found that there was effective and appropriate supervision when required in 11 of the 12 cases audited.

The force needs to improve the number of non-emergency calls that are abandoned before they are answered

The force receives a large number of 101 calls. In the year ending 30 September 2024, it received 387 101 calls per 1,000 population. This was higher than expected compared to the average for forces in England and Wales.

The force told us that for the year ending 28 February 2025, 12.15 percent of calls to its non-emergency 101 number were abandoned. As set out in the 2020 national contact management strategy principles and guidance, forces with a switchboard should aim to have an abandonment rate below 5 percent. Senior leaders have a good understanding of this data, but the force should make sure it is better able to answer non-emergency calls before callers disengage.

The force identifies vulnerability within its calls for service but needs to make sure it records information about vulnerable people and uses it to inform the response the caller receives

The force provides [vulnerability training](#) to control room officers and staff. It also has performance and quality assurance processes in place to monitor how effectively call handlers identify vulnerability issues. And the FCR command and control system identifies repeat callers effectively.

In our victim service assessment we reviewed calls to the force from the public, to see whether it routinely identified vulnerable and repeat victims. In the sample we examined there was a check for a vulnerable victim or other person in 82 of 83 relevant cases. But when it identified a vulnerable person, this was only recorded in 43 of 59 cases. This may mean that the police officers who respond to the call don't know that someone is vulnerable. During our inspection, we found that at that time call takers were identifying and recording this information effectively.

Not effectively identifying vulnerability and risk, or incorrectly grading the priority of police response, may lead to the caller or victim not receiving the appropriate safeguarding or support from the police. During our inspection, we could see that these were performance areas that the force was working to improve.

Investigating crime

Requires
improvement

South Yorkshire Police requires improvement at investigating crime.

Areas for improvement

The force doesn't consistently achieve appropriate outcomes for victims

The force doesn't consistently achieve acceptable outcomes for [victims](#) of crime. The number of crimes it solves following investigations is low. It needs to understand why this is the case and to work to achieve better outcomes for victims.

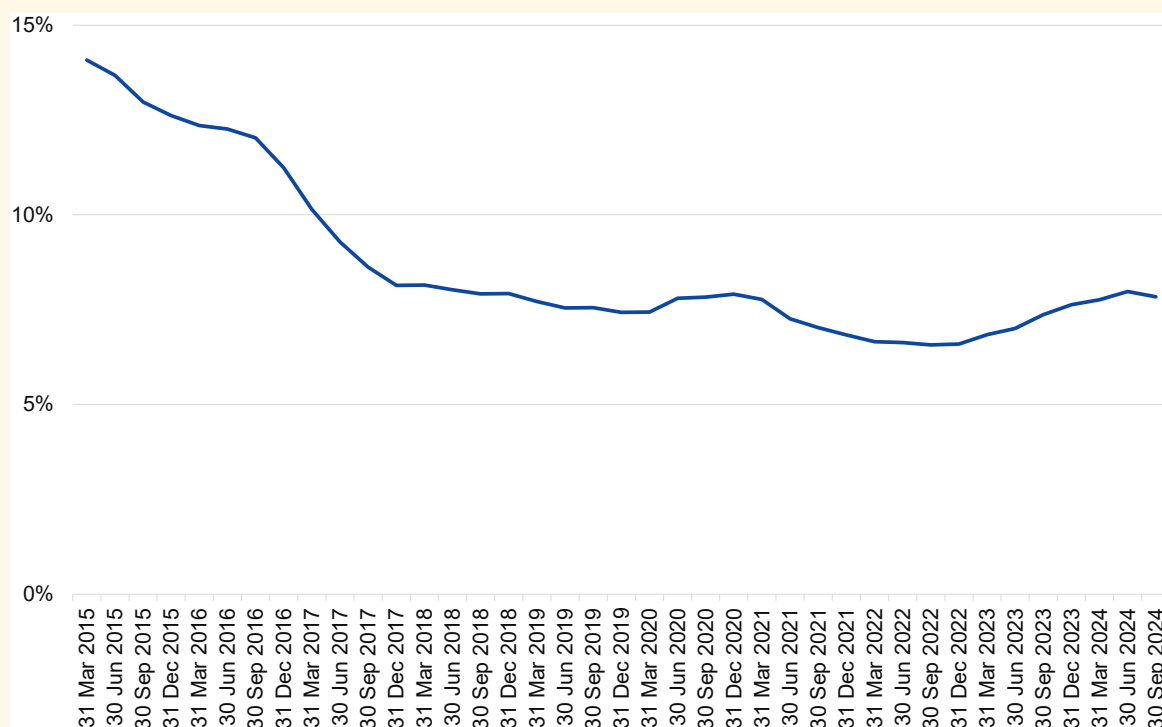
In the year ending 30 September 2024, South Yorkshire Police recorded 125,472 victim-based crimes. Only 10.9 percent of these recorded offences were assigned an 'offences brought to justice' outcome. This was within the normal range compared to other forces in England and Wales.

Table 1: Percentage of victim-based crime recorded by South Yorkshire Police and all forces in England and Wales by selected outcome types in the year ending 30 September 2024

Outcome types	Force outcome rate	England and Wales outcome rate
1 – Charged/summonsed	7.8%	6.4%
2 & 3 – Caution – youths and adults	0.6%	0.7%
8 – Community resolutions	2.1%	1.8%
9 – Prosecution not in the public interest (Crown Prosecution Service decision)	0.0%	0.0%
10 & 21 – Prosecution not in the public interest (police decision)	0.3%	0.8%
14 – Evidential difficulties (suspect not identified but the victim declines or is unable to support)	3.0%	5.9%
15 – Evidential difficulties (suspect identified; victim supports police action)	10.5%	12.7%
16 – Evidential difficulties (suspect identified; victim doesn't support or withdraws support)	26.5%	21.1%
17 – Prosecution time limit expired	0.1%	0.3%
18 – Investigation complete – no suspect identified	46.1%	42.6%
20 – Action undertaken by another body/ agency	0.6%	1.5%
22 – Diversionary, educational or intervention activity	0.2%	0.4%

Source: [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data](#) tables from the Home Office

Figure 2: Proportion of victim-based crimes assigned a 'charged/summonsed' outcome (outcome 1) by South Yorkshire Police between the year ending 31 March 2015 and the year ending 30 September 2024



Source: [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data](#) tables from the Home Office

The force should make sure investigation plans are followed, and are properly supervised

The force doesn't always make sure that there is effective supervision of crime investigations. Which may mean that some evidential opportunities are lost at the start of investigations. As part of our [victim](#) service assessment we found that some supervisor reviews could have contained more information and clearer rationale for decisions. If this had happened, investigations may have progressed quicker and been more effective.

In our victim service assessment, we found that 51 out of 82 investigations had effective supervision. Evidence of investigation plans was found in 69 out of 80 relevant cases and investigation plans were followed and updated in 56 of 70 relevant cases. Only 63 out of 86 relevant finalised crimes had effective supervision. We also found that there were unjustified delays in investigations in 16 out of 100 cases.

During our inspection, we found the supervisory oversight, quality and timeliness of investigations to be inconsistent. Many supervisors told us that they were unable to complete investigation plans and to carry out monthly reviews of their [officers](#)' crime investigations due to a lack of time and capacity. They said that they were affected by high workloads and dealing with daily demand.

Lack of oversight can result in investigations being less effective. In our audit we found that the force's investigations weren't always effective. Only 69 out of the 100 cases reviewed as part of our victim service assessment had an effective investigation. We also found that investigative opportunities weren't always taken. Of the cases we audited, we found evidence that officers had taken all appropriate investigative opportunities in 56 out of 85 cases.

The force only requires supervisors to review the investigations that their officers are carrying out after 28 days. During our inspection we found that some carried out earlier reviews, but this was inconsistent across the force. The force has also removed the requirement for inspectors to review investigations and their supervisors' actions. Instead, inspectors carry out monthly [dip samples](#) of crimes under the investigation quality review system. But these are often reviews of investigations from across the force and not those of their own teams. Inspectors' reviews of their officers' crimes improve the quality and supervision of investigations and give supervisors greater support.

The force needs to make sure that the requirements of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime are complied with

Under the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime \('the Victims' Code'\)](#) all [victims](#) of a criminal offence are entitled to a needs assessment. This assessment identifies at an early stage what measures can support them throughout the investigation and whether a victim is entitled to an enhanced level of service.

In our victim service assessment audit we found that victim needs assessments were recorded in 54 of 73 relevant cases and that an entitlement to an enhanced service was recorded in only 20 of 46 relevant cases. This means that some victims may not have received the support they needed.

The code of practice also includes a requirement that police [officers](#) and [staff](#) should make sure they update victims about the progress of their investigations. The commitment to giving these updates regularly, at a frequency agreed with the victim, is known as the 'victim contract'. We found that a victim contract was completed in 75 of 82 relevant cases. And the agreed victim contract was adhered to in 62 out of 71 relevant cases. But during our inspection we found that the frequency of contact was set by default to 28 days (or to 7 days if the victim was [vulnerable](#)). This meant that the victim's contact preferences weren't considered, and that some victims may not have received prompt updates on investigations.

The force monitors its officers' compliance with the Victims' Code. And has made amendments to its IT systems to make recording of victim needs assessments easier. The force told us that this is resulting in better completion rates, but it still needs to do more to support victims of crime.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force investigates crime.

The force has a management structure that provides governance and oversight of investigations

The force has effective governance structures to oversee crime investigations. The deputy chief constable chairs the monthly force performance day meetings, which review investigation performance. An assistant chief constable chairs the investigations governance group. It provides oversight of all investigative activity and promotes improvement.

An assistant chief constable chairs quarterly performance reviews which oversee investigation performance at a departmental and district level. These reviews hold the local police commander or departmental head to account for how well their area of the force carries out its investigations and supports victims.

The investigation improvement unit (IIU) oversees the force's IQR system. This requires inspectors across the force to review randomly selected investigation reports. They then give feedback to the investigating officers and identify patterns of good and poor performance. The IQRs examine performance within four areas: victim focus, suspect management, investigation quality and supervisor reviews. The IIU addresses poor performance with tactics such as 'micro-targeted' training, which provides advice that is specifically related to an individual officer's need. The IIU also gives presentations, training and guidance across the force. This includes providing investigation handbooks, aide-mémoires and a supervisor review template. These are available to all officers and staff within the force's investigations knowledge hub on its internal website.

The force is improving the capacity and capability of its digital forensic unit

During our inspection, we found that there were delays in the digital examination of devices, and that these were leading to longer investigation times. Devices including mobile phones and computers were awaiting examination for longer than the agreed time. This causes delays in the completion of investigations and in offenders being brought to justice.

In response to growing demand the force has introduced more digital media investigators (DMIs), improving its ability to carry out digital investigations and expanding the digital forensics unit (DFU).

DMIs work within the force's 'scene and submissions' team. They are trained and equipped to attend premises where there may be electronic devices that contain evidence of offences. They can locate and triage such devices, reducing the number of items that officers need to seize.

The force has also invested in unmarked vehicles to use as accredited mobile examination rooms. These digital vans have a range of technical examination devices to help with on-site evidence gathering. Officers often use the vans at incidents involving rape and serious sexual offences to give victims an enhanced service. The force's online investigations teams also use the vans to execute warrants when a discreet approach is needed to protect a suspect or a suspect's family.

During our inspection we spoke to investigating officers across different specialist teams and departments. They told us that while the examination of digital devices still delayed investigations, the situation had much improved with the expansion of the DFU. And that the attendance at scenes by DMIs to locate and assess the evidential value of devices had become more routine. The DFU still has backlogs of devices awaiting examination. But it told us that these are prioritised by level of risk and that it was using external forensic service providers to reduce examination times.

In our victim service assessment, we found that there were unjustified delays in investigations due to [digital forensics](#) or digital examinations in 2 of the 14 relevant cases we reviewed. And since that assessment the changes to the DFU have been implemented.

We saw evidence of DFU teams working proactively with specialist investigators, such as internet sexual offences teams. We also saw DFU newsletters and guidance for investigators regarding digital evidence opportunities and submissions. There was a clear commitment by the DFU to improve performance and to achieve better outcomes for victims.

The allocation of crimes across the force is inconsistent, leading to investigations being delayed or not thoroughly carried out

During our inspection we found that there were differences in operational delivery across the four districts of the force. Force crime allocation and investigation policies are locally adapted so a range of functions or departments in different districts may investigate crimes. For example, similar fraud offences were investigated by response officers in one district, by neighbourhood teams in another and by the criminal investigation department (CID) in a third.

We found that work allocated by local daily management meetings often took priority. Officers and staff told us that this often happened on weekends. Suspects arrested overnight were allocated the following morning with no consideration of the planned investigation activity. This sometimes resulted in pre-arranged victim interviews having to be rearranged or pro-active operations being cancelled.

Officers and staff told us that the lack of consistency across districts and the lack of clarity over responsibility for investigations sometimes resulted in teams passing crimes back and forth before investigating them. This delayed the progress of the investigation and may have resulted in evidence being missed. Officers and staff in one district of the force told us that their local crime allocation policy changed 4 times in the 12 months before our inspection. This had resulted in a lot of confusion and arguments between teams.

Officers and staff told us that when they were allocated crime investigations that they thought fell outside their remit, they often didn't carry out thorough investigations. They and their supervisors carried out what they considered to be a 'proportionate' investigation and concentrated on the investigations that they felt should be their priorities. This could be leading to victims receiving a lower level of service than one they expect.

We assessed investigator workloads during our inspection fieldwork. We found that workloads within specialist investigation teams, such as CID and vulnerability teams, were the highest across the force. Some officers had over 40 active investigations, which makes it difficult to manage enquiries and victim contact well. Officers and staff in those teams felt that they were allocated crime offences that were outside their remit which reduced their capacity to deal with more serious offences.

The force needs to improve the quality of handover files to avoid evidential opportunities being missed

When an officer transfers an investigation to another officer, they give what is known as a handover. These documents should record all the actions that the initial investigator carried out and highlight actions that need to be completed.

The force told us that there are two templates that officers can complete to provide handover information in a consistent format. But officers and staff that we spoke to told us that there are at least seven different versions of handover documents and that they vary in content and structure. They also told us that the quality of handovers, particularly those related to a person in custody overnight, is poor.

The CID officers and staff we spoke to told us that due to the poor quality of information about evidence collection and initial investigation activity documented within handovers, they routinely had to re-start investigations. This often resulted in investigations taking longer than they should and suspects having to be unnecessarily released on [bail](#).

Other officers told us that they rarely had time to complete handover documents and that very few were quality checked by their supervisors. They also told us that there was an unwillingness to challenge officers whose handovers weren't good enough. Some experienced investigators told us that they found this frustrating and that this allowed poor standards to continue.

Poor handover quality not only results in inefficiency and duplication of effort but can also affect the ability to bring offences to justice. Several investigators told us that poor initial investigation and handovers directly affected their ability to carry out evidence-led investigations. These are necessary when a victim is unwilling or unable to support the investigation. In such cases, investigators aim to make best use of all evidential opportunities, such as CCTV, witness testimony, BWV footage and initial call recordings.

The force is aware of the need for it to improve handover quality and it is one of the core themes identified through the investigation quality review process. South Yorkshire Police should make sure that handovers are completed to a high standard and are appropriately supervised in all cases.

The force needs to make sure it is using outcomes appropriately, which comply with force and national policies, leading to satisfactory results for victims

Police forces are accountable for the decisions they make when closing and disposing of reported crime. These decisions should follow the National Crime Recording Standards. The record should also reflect the victim's concerns and views. Before closing a crime investigation, the force should make sure it talks to victims and lets them know that it is closing the case.

The force needs to do more to understand the reasons some outcomes were reached and what improvements might be needed to give victims the justice they deserve. It also needs to make sure that it is using outcomes correctly, leading to satisfactory results for victims.

We found inconsistencies in the processing and application of crime outcome codes to close investigations. In our victim service assessment, we found that the force applied the correct outcome in only 69 of 87 cases. We found that the force consulted the victim before the outcome was finalised in 43 out of 47 cases. It considered the victims' views in 53 out of 58 cases. It recorded a rationale for the outcome in 72 out of 85 cases.

Protecting vulnerable people

Adequate

South Yorkshire Police is adequate at protecting vulnerable people.

Areas for improvement

The force should have reliable processes to monitor protective orders and make sure it prioritises the safeguarding of victims

The force uses preventative orders (also known as ancillary orders) to reduce the risk of re-offending and increase [safeguarding](#) for [victims](#). These include [Domestic Violence Protection Notices \(DVPNs\)](#), [Domestic Violence Protection Orders \(DVPOs\)](#) and [Stalking Protection Orders \(SPOs\)](#).

[Officers](#) dealing with incidents involving these types of abuse should consider applying for such orders as part of their support for victims. But in our victim service assessment we found that this happened in only 8 of 13 cases where it would have been appropriate.

In the year ending 30 September 2024, the force recorded 38,395 [domestic abuse-related](#) incidents, which equated to 27.3 such incidents per 1,000 population. This was higher than the average rate across all forces in England and Wales of 20 domestic abuse-related incidents per 1,000 population. During the same period, the force made 558 DVPO applications at court. This equated to DVPO applications being made in 2.37 percent of the recorded domestic abuse-related crimes.

The force has increased its use of Stalking Prevention Orders and requires offenders to complete a Compulsive and Obsessive Behaviour Intervention programme. It makes good use of a Power BI dashboard to monitor performance in relation to most ancillary orders. The force's [protecting vulnerable people \(PVP\)](#) performance and governance team monitors domestic abuse cases where there is no recorded consideration for a DVPN.

But the force doesn't have effective processes in place to check that protective orders are being complied with by the perpetrators. Proactive compliance checks on people subject to these orders, and welfare checks on those they live with, aren't carried out consistently.

During our inspection, we spoke to officers and [staff](#) from different teams and districts across the force and found that there was confusion around compliance checks. Officers in one area told us that domestic abuse teams oversaw DVPOs within their area. And they allocated regular checks to [neighbourhood teams](#). But the neighbourhood teams told us they were rarely able to carry out the checks due to other demands. And that these checks weren't seen as a priority. Other areas of the force told us directly that compliance checks on ancillary orders weren't being carried out.

We found that some officers who deal with victims and perpetrators weren't aware of the force's expectations in relation to the monitoring of orders. Response supervisors told us that they have had little training in either the use of or monitoring of DVPOs.

We found that officers responsible for DVPNs and DVPOs aren't proactively monitoring compliance. This means [vulnerable](#) victims have to report breaches themselves. The force should make sure that all officers and staff are aware of what it expects of them in relation to compliance checks. It should also and monitor their completion.

The force should align its central and local governance arrangements to improve the service vulnerable people receive

While [protecting vulnerable people \(PVP\)](#) performance is centrally governed, the force has locally based vulnerability teams within districts, with only limited centrally controlled vulnerability functions. During our inspection we found that this sometimes led to different approaches to [vulnerability](#) across different parts of the force.

There are monthly force-level PVP performance and governance (PVP PAG) meetings that oversee performance across the force's vulnerability teams. These meetings discuss reports on how the force is performing and analysis of emerging issues. The PVP PAG unit examines national best practice, carries out regular audits of PVP working practices and manages the force's [Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment](#) process.

While the PVP PAG unit oversees performance and encourages best practice, it is the geographical districts of the force that control the resourcing of local domestic abuse teams and direct what investigations they take on. During our inspection we found that there were differences in how PVP teams, [child](#) exploitation teams and domestic abuse teams operated across the four districts. In some areas of the force PVP teams focused on rape and serious sexual offences, while in others they were also required to routinely investigate domestic abuse cases and other crimes.

We found that in three of the four districts, standard and medium-risk domestic abuse investigations were retained by response teams. While in the other district they only retained standard domestic abuse investigations. The rest were investigated by the local PVP team. The [officers](#) that we spoke to told us that this had resulted in response officers becoming de-skilled in investigating domestic abuse. And that as a result response officers within that area submitted fewer [Domestic Violence Protection Notice](#) applications than their colleagues elsewhere in the force.

The force told us that it supported these different, locally based models and that they reflected the different local authority structures and crime profiles. But PVP officers and [staff](#) told us that they were often frustrated in their efforts to support vulnerable victims and deal with serious offenders by competing demand and inconsistencies in approach across districts.

[Multi-agency risk assessment conference \(MARAC\)](#) meetings are well established, and risk is managed through partnership working. In the year ending 30 September 2024, South Yorkshire Police discussed 3,668 cases at MARAC meetings, which was above the number (2,280) recommended by [SafeLives](#) based on the size of the population.

MARAC cases should be heard within four weeks. But in one district we found long delays of up to 11 weeks. In October 2023, SafeLives published a report on the Sheffield MARAC, within which it identified a backlog of cases awaiting MARAC. The force discussed this backlog of around 200 cases with the local authority. But despite increasing staffing of the MARACs to allow more meetings to take place, the backlog remained in October 2024 when the assistant chief constable executive lead for vulnerability became involved.

During our inspection, we found that the backlog had risen to 318 victims whose cases were awaiting review at MARAC. The force was trying to mitigate the risk by reviewing the risk each case presented. But it is concerning that this matter wasn't brought to the attention of the executive lead earlier. Once they knew about the issue, they put improvement plans in place and added more MARAC meetings. But the force should make sure that its governance arrangements are aligned to identify and address long-term or major localised issues that affect the service to vulnerable victims.

At the time of our inspection, the force didn't have a central MARAC steering group. Such a group could discuss emerging issues across districts of the force and may have helped to identify this backlog to senior leaders at an earlier stage.

Innovative practice

The force makes good use of a violence against women and girls independent advisory group to help it develop training for officers and staff and support for victims

South Yorkshire Police has established a violence against women and girls independent advisory group (IAG) which meets quarterly. Panel members are [victims](#) and survivors, academics, partner organisations and police. The force uses the lived experiences and knowledge of the group to help it shape new initiatives to make sure that it supports victims of sexual or [domestic abuse](#) throughout investigations.

During our inspection, we attended one of the meetings. The group discussed force functions and ways of working and gave challenging opinions on them that made sure that the victims were considered at every stage. The attendees were a mix of people who identified as survivors of violence against women and girls and representatives of support groups and services. They have a diverse range of experiences and expertise within the subject area.

The force told us that there are over 50 members of the IAG, with around half attending each meeting. As well as the quarterly meetings, the group often meets to address a particular issue or to help the force understand the victim's perspective of a new initiative or challenge. When necessary, the IAG forms sub-groups to examine specific issues. For instance, to address a specific issue, an [honour-based abuse](#) group met to provide the force with insight and understanding that it couldn't get elsewhere.

The force gave us several examples of where the IAG has influenced and directed force working practices:

- Influencing the creation and wording of a new rape and serious sexual offences victim booklet.
- Revising the force's no further action letter for rape and serious sexual offences to better support victims.
- Helping to develop the content of a training package about violence against women and girls for [force control room officers](#) and [staff](#).
- Working with the force to develop its 'Walk-Safe' application.
- Helping to evaluate the control room's use of video technology to provide [Clare's Law](#) disclosures.
- Providing a critical review of the force's 'No More', 'Do More' and 'Know More' media campaigns tackling violence against women and girls throughout their development.

The violence against women and girls IAG shows that the force is considering the victim's voice throughout the implementation of new practices. And we found that feedback from the group is influencing force training, publications and campaigns.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force protects vulnerable people.

South Yorkshire Police has a strategy, performance framework and governance structure in place for vulnerability

The force has introduced a new vulnerability strategy that is aligned with the College of Policing vulnerability strands. An assistant chief constable is the executive lead for vulnerability and designated senior officers are responsible for each of the strands. At the time of our inspection, the force was introducing a delivery plan that will detail how the force implements the aims of the vulnerability strategy. This strategy is overseen by the force's Strategic Safeguarding and Vulnerability Assurance Group (SSVAG) which is linked to the College of Policing's National Vulnerability Action Plan.

Leadership and governance are strong. Governance boards at both local and force levels manage vulnerability. As well as the SSVAG, the force has a Violence Against Women and Girls Executive Group, a Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Improvement [Gold Group](#) and a National Child Protection Governance Meeting, all chaired by the vulnerability executive lead. And the force uses Power BI well to scrutinise performance, to support performance meetings and to produce detailed performance packs.

But during our inspection, we found that the force's central governance didn't always understand the different ways that the district vulnerability teams operated. This meant that local initiatives that could lead to force-wide improvements weren't always implemented across all four districts.

The force makes effective use of the domestic violence disclosure scheme but needs to comply with the required timescales

The [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme \(DVDS\)](#), also known as Clare's Law, gives any member of the public the 'right to ask' the police if their partner or ex-partner may pose a risk to them. It is based on the partner or ex-partner's history of domestic abuse or violence. There is also a 'right to know' in certain circumstances, which means the police can proactively share information with people about their partner or ex-partner's history of domestic abuse or violence. This allows the person to consider what risk their partner may pose.

The force makes good use of the DVDS. This includes both the 'right to ask' and the 'right to know'. The force told us that it recognised that it needed to improve the number of DVDS applications and disclosures to help keep people safe. It has increased publicity of the DVDS to try and generate more applications. In the year ending 30 September 2024, the force recorded 1,005 'right to know' applications. This equated to 7.14 applications per 10,000 population. This is within the normal range compared to other forces across England and Wales. In the same period, the force recorded 552 'right to know' disclosures. This represented 3.92 disclosures per 10,000 population. This was higher than expected compared to other forces across England and Wales. But over the same period, the force only received 5.24 'right to ask' applications per 10,000 population. The force needs to do more to promote the use of DVDS to the public and partner agencies to improve use of the scheme.

During our inspection, we reviewed the quality of information the force shares through the DVDS and found that it was of a high standard. Reviewing officers assess all allegations against the perpetrator and identify if there are themes in offending. They consider factors such as the language the perpetrator used during attacks and how the perpetrator caused harm.

We found that some areas of the force had backlogs in DVDS applications that were awaiting disclosure. Some of these were outside the 28-day timescale. But during our inspection, changes were put in place and the backlogs were cleared. The force should continue to make sure that applications are progressed within the 28-day timescale laid out in the Home Office guidance.

The force has a priority prisoner domestic disclosure scheme. This requires officers to consider making a right to know disclosure to support domestic abuse victims while the suspect is in custody. Early victim communication has been shown to offer victims greater empowerment to leave abusive relationships and to work with the criminal justice process.

The force works with partner agencies to reduce harm for vulnerable people and it carries out risk assessments and puts safeguarding in place

The force's PVP performance and governance unit is responsible for overseeing safeguarding activity across the force. The unit carries out secondary risk assessments of all medium and [high-risk domestic abuse](#) incidents. It also dips samples standard-risk assessed incidents to make sure that they are accurately graded and completed to the required standards. The team reviews the BWV footage from the incidents and provides feedback and guidance to officers when it is necessary.

The submitting officer's line manager also assesses all standard-risk domestic abuse referrals before sending them to the local authority. We reviewed some of these and found them to be of a good standard.

At the time of our inspection, there were no backlogs of referrals waiting for secondary risk assessment. We carried out an audit of a sample of referral reports and found that they were completed appropriately. The medium and high-risk referrals we assessed had detailed information about the perpetrator and victim relationship and considered the [voice of the child](#). The force's IT systems automatically generate an [Operation Encompass](#) referral when a child is linked to a domestic abuse incident. Operation Encompass is a nationally recognised set of professional standards to make sure that police officers notify schools about domestic abuse incidents.

The force has local referral units within each of its four districts. These are responsible for statutory child protection information sharing. They are joint teams of police and partner agency staff who work closely together. There are also multi-agency child exploitation tactical groups across South Yorkshire that review all child exploitation intelligence and missing child episodes. The force told us that the introduction of these child exploitation tactical groups has resulted in a higher quantity and quality of intelligence reports relating to child criminal and sexual exploitation.

The force makes sure that all officers, especially those in specialist roles, receive the training they need to carry out their responsibilities

Safeguarding vulnerable people of any age can be complex. It is important that officers and staff responsible for this in any role have the skills, training and ability to provide a high-quality safeguarding response. Officers and staff must be able to identify and reduce risk and give appropriate support and safeguarding.

We found that safeguarding and vulnerability training for frontline officers and staff and their supervisors was effective and that officers valued it. Student officers receive safeguarding training that was developed by the central PVP team. All response officers and staff have received DA (Domestic Abuse) Matters and Child Matters training. This is provided internally by SafeLives-accredited South Yorkshire Police staff and is focused on risk assessment and providing effective support for victims.

During our inspection, we spoke to response officers who told us that this training had changed how they approach domestic abuse incidents.

Response and NPT officers and staff receive regular continuation training. The Street Skills one-day training course includes a range of topics. But we were told that there is always a safeguarding element to the training.

The force has recruited around 200 officers and staff, who don't work exclusively in safeguarding roles, to be domestic abuse champions. They are mainly from response teams and the FCR, but also include some NPT officers. These champions receive enhanced training and regular updates. They can then offer information and advice for their colleagues to encourage them to focus on domestic abuse issues and to support victims.

During our inspection, the force was providing training to all frontline personnel on its new domestic abuse risk assessment forms. These had replaced the domestic abuse, [stalking](#) and [harassment](#) forms. The officers we spoke to felt that this was a simpler form to complete, and it helped officers to assess the level of risk more accurately.

The force has developed comprehensive training for specialist safeguarding teams. The force's domestic abuse risk assessment team manager provides an annual 'PVP masterclass' to all officers and staff involved in protecting vulnerable people, to update them on legislation, policy and procedure changes. The audience includes personnel from domestic abuse teams, child exploitation teams, [Violent and Sex Offender Register \(ViSOR\)](#) teams, integrated offender managers, PVP teams, CID and domestic abuse champions. The force told us that it has seen improvements in key areas of performance following these training days. For instance, one masterclass focused on SPOs and it resulted in an increase in successful applications for SPOs across the force.

Specialist safeguarding and PVP personnel receive additional training. All [professionalising investigation programme 2](#) (PIP 2) PVP officers and staff complete the [specialist child abuse investigation development programme](#). PVP supervisors have quarterly learning days and PIP 2 supervision away days. They told us these make sure that they stay up to date with professional practice.

But the force should make sure that it trains PVP personnel before they begin their role. Officers and staff told us that when they entered PVP they were expected to attend safeguarding meetings and to carry a workload of high-risk cases on their first day, before they had received the relevant training and guidance. This may mean that victims aren't supported appropriately or that investigations aren't properly carried out as the officers and staff lack the required knowledge and experience.

Managing offenders and suspects

Adequate

South Yorkshire Police is adequate at managing offenders and suspects.

Area for improvement

The force should make sure that its internet child abuse investigation teams have enough capacity and can manage images of online child abuse within nationally recognised risk assessment timescales

The force has a team dedicated to dealing with high and very high-risk investigations into images of online [child](#) abuse. Medium and low-risk cases are dealt with by [protecting vulnerable people](#) teams and in one district by the criminal investigation department.

During our inspection we found that the dedicated team was understaffed, and that [officers](#) felt overworked.

The [Kent internet risk assessment tool \(KIRAT\)](#) is used to identify the level of risk posed by people suspected of accessing indecent images of children. This assessment determines the timescale in which the force should take action against a suspect, such as making an arrest or executing a search warrant.

During our inspection we found cases that hadn't been actioned within the KIRAT timescales:

- Of 28 investigations allocated to the dedicated team between June and August 2024, 19 cases were found to be outside KIRAT time limits.
- In October 2024, we reviewed 9 cases from the dedicated team and found that only 5 were progressed within KIRAT timescales.
- In November 2024, we reviewed the last 30 cases dealt with by the dedicated team and found that 11 were within KIRAT timescales, 10 were outside KIRAT time limits with a search warrant obtained. And nine were outside KIRAT time limits with no warrant obtained.
- We also found that some medium and low-risk cases dealt with by districts were outside KIRAT time limits.

The force implemented the operational prioritisation response tool for online child [sexual abuse](#) offending in July 2024. This requires the force's dedicated team to deal with any identified suspect under the age of 18 who resides with or has access to siblings. Officers and staff told us that this has greatly increased their workloads, but that the force had no plans to increase the number of investigators within the team.

National Crime Agency [child exploitation online protection](#) referrals to the force are likely to further increase workloads.

We also found that internet child abuse team officers had active workloads averaging 20 cases per officer, with the highest caseload for an individual officer being 27 cases and the lowest 17. Within the team there were 31 suspects awaiting arrest and 38 had been on [bail](#) for over 12 months.

South Yorkshire Police should better manage its efforts to reduce workloads and backlogs. And it should enforce cases involving images of online child abuse within KIRAT timescales. This will allow the force to protect the public from harm caused by those who access and share these images.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force manages offenders and suspects.

The force effectively monitors and pursues outstanding offenders, prioritising those who pose the most risk

South Yorkshire Police has governance processes for managing wanted suspects through its force daily management meetings, force accountability meetings and local accountability meetings.

Outstanding suspects are discussed at district and force daily management meetings. Those who present the greatest risk are identified as priority arrests. During our inspection, we saw that on most days, districts deployed priority arrest cars to target those people. And specialist teams from across the force help to locate and arrest priority suspects where needed. Outstanding high-risk suspects are reviewed daily by detective inspectors to make sure that activity to locate them is appropriate.

The force has a suspect management process and a Power BI dashboard that identifies and prioritises outstanding people. A key part of the force's IQR system is suspect management. This looks at the investigating officer's effectiveness in locating and detaining outstanding suspects. The force uses this information to improve performance across the force and give individual feedback to officers when needed.

The force effectively manages the risk posed to the public by registered sex offenders in line with authorised professional practice guidelines

The central PVP performance and governance unit sets standards for registered sex offender management. It also has a ViSOR administration team that reviews all reported incidents that involve a registered sex offender and has a Power BI dashboard to monitor ViSOR performance. During our inspection, we found that there was scrutiny of performance through district tactical meetings, force-wide monthly performance meetings and the quarterly performance reviews chaired by an assistant chief constable.

The force has district-based ViSOR teams that are responsible for the local management of registered sex offenders.

During our inspection, we found that [active risk management system \(ARMS\)](#) assessments and risk management plans were completed to a good standard and complied with College of Policing [authorised professional practice \(APP\)](#) guidance. We found that all relevant officers and staff were ARMS trained.

The force has two officers who are trained to administer polygraph tests. The ViSOR teams regularly use this technology as a condition of preventative orders such as [Sexual Harm Prevention Orders](#). Officers and staff told us that they are seeing positive results from the use of polygraph tests, and they are helping to keep the public safe. At the time of our inspection, the force had completed more polygraph tests than any of the other 13 forces who use it as a tool in offender management.

During our inspection, officers and staff told us that intelligence checks aren't always carried out fully before visits to registered sex offenders. They told us that they know that this is best practice, but sometimes the demand on the team to carry out visits meant that they weren't able to complete the checks. And not all ViSOR teams contain personnel trained to carry out [Police National Database](#) checks. This could mean that intelligence held on subjects by other police forces isn't considered.

Officers told us that in some districts public protection officers and staff are regularly moved from their teams to deal with prisoners, particularly during the evenings and at weekends. The officers told us that this was affecting the ability of those teams to manage their workloads. And it was regularly affecting their capacity to carry out visits to offenders on weekends, in line with their specific risk management plans.

Some officers and staff told us that the role of the ViSOR teams wasn't well understood across the force. This may mean that intelligence regarding registered sex offenders isn't gathered as well as it could be, and that offenders aren't as closely monitored as their behaviour should dictate. We found that in some areas of the force this was being addressed by allowing officers from other teams, including neighbourhoods and CID, to have short attachments to the ViSOR team. The force also encourages trainee probation service officers to work with them to improve their understanding of the teams and to encourage partnership working.

The force should make sure that its approach to managing bail is consistent and effective

During our inspection, we found that officers understood the importance of the use of bail conditions to safeguard vulnerable people and to manage the risk posed by some suspects. But the approach to managing bail across the force's four districts was inconsistent.

At the time of our inspection, the force had a small team of bail sergeants who oversaw bail-related matters and worked closely with the investigating officers and [custody sergeants](#). Some teams within the force maintained their own bail diaries. But in other teams officers had to manage their own bail appointments.

The bail sergeants and supervisors within districts told us that people often had to be re-bailed when the relevant investigating officers didn't attend appointments with suspects who returned to the custody unit as part of their bail conditions. This meant that suspects either had to be re-bailed to a later date or dealt with by officers who didn't have knowledge of the case. And that as a result, investigations took longer than they should.

Officers told us that the bail sergeants monitored bail diaries and helped to make sure that officers attended appointments. But we found that bail sergeants weren't used consistently across the force. And where they weren't in place the management of bail was less effective.

During our inspection we reviewed custody records relating to people released on bail. We found that there were a high number of records where the bail period had lapsed. If the bail lapses at the end of the authorised bail period, then it is converted to [released under investigation](#). This means that any bail conditions imposed to protect victims no longer apply, and that may expose the victim to risk of harm. At the time of our inspection the force had a total of 109 lapsed bail cases. The total numbers were much higher in some districts than in others.

We also found that in some of the cases we reviewed, victims weren't informed when a suspect related to their case was re-bailed. Again, this may mean the victim is exposed to risk. And as a re-bail is considered a release on bail, there is a duty on the police to ask the views of the victim on any bail conditions considered.

The force should make sure that its officers are able to manage bail effectively to protect victims of crime from further risk of harm.

There are differences in the approach to the management of offenders and suspects across the different districts of the force which is affecting performance

The force has a standard operating procedure in place which governs most of the processes and activity carried out by ViSOR teams across the force. But despite this, there are clear differences in how offenders are managed. The cause of this inconsistency is that a different command team governs each district ViSOR unit. And there is a central PVP performance and governance team, but local supervisors and senior leaders choose to operate differently.

During our inspection, we found inconsistency in the approach to double-crewing of officers and staff for home visits, the use of applications to monitor offenders' use of electronic devices, the work of risk-based assessors and the [reactive management](#) of offenders.

We found that different initiatives were used across the districts. Sometimes as trials or pilots, but often as an accepted way of working. And this included what we considered positive practice. For instance, in one district we found that ViSOR personnel regularly briefed neighbourhood officers and those carrying out night-time economy patrols regarding registered sex offenders living in the area and who may pose a risk to the public. And we were told that the force had trialled the use of neighbourhood officers to assist in offender management visits to help fulfil the double-crewing requirement. ViSOR personnel told us that the benefit was limited, so it was stopped in three districts. But it still took place in the fourth. We didn't see a process to evaluate different approaches to decide which was best for the force to use consistently.

The force is aware that offenders in reactive management are dealt with differently across districts. We were told that teams in some districts are visiting their reactively managed offenders. The force's position is that there is no requirement to visit a reactively managed offender, but this is still occurring. This is against College of Policing guidance and reduces the force's capacity to prioritise higher-risk offenders.

The force's expectation is that visits to offenders should be double-crewed, but we found that some teams carry out single-crewed visits. Single officer visits are against the APP. They are less effective, and offender managers could be putting themselves at risk.

Officers and staff in some districts reported being regularly diverted away from their core role to carry out other duties. This limits their ability to plan and complete their work. The force doesn't have a process in place to monitor these diversions.

There are differences in the ratio of [management of sexual offenders and violent offenders](#) officers to registered sex offenders between districts. During our inspection we found that most districts were slightly over the ideal ratio of officers to registered offenders. But one district had higher numbers of offenders per officer. We were told that this was due to vacancies within the team and diverting officers away from their main duties.

The force should review the working practices carried out across South Yorkshire in relation to the management of offenders, and make sure that there is greater consistency and that APP is followed.

Building, supporting and protecting the workforce

Requires improvement

South Yorkshire Police requires improvement at building, supporting and protecting the workforce.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to understand its workforce's well-being challenges and improve governance to provide consistent well-being support

The force needs to do more to understand the factors that have positive and negative effects on its workforce's well-being. This includes areas of high demand and those areas that present high risk to workforce well-being. The [officers](#) and [staff](#) we spoke to felt the force didn't understand their role and the stresses placed on them.

Officers and staff told us that they felt unable to cope with their high workloads and that this had affected the quality of their [safeguarding](#) activity and investigations. Officers and staff across the force, in particular sergeants, reported having to take work home as they didn't have enough time to complete it within their normal hours. From 11 November to 9 December 2024, we sent a workforce survey to the force. Of those who responded, 70.5 percent (1,013 of 1,436 respondents) agreed that they achieve a good balance between their work and private life. But when looking only at police and student officers, this decreases to 54.9 percent (348 of 634 respondents). The force should improve its understanding of demand pressures on officers and staff so that it can provide better support to those in high-demand roles.

The force's well-being structure appeared to be in a state of transition, with several changes proposed but not yet fully put in place. The force's people board meets quarterly to oversee well-being. We found that the board doesn't have enough well-being information, so it is often unaware of data or trends. There is also a force-wide well-being board that meets every two months. But it told us that it doesn't record any formal minutes or actions.

Neither meeting considers data or performance information relating to workloads. Specific data and information isn't provided, analysed or discussed in order to help the force to understand what factors have positive and negative effects on its workforce's well-being. The force's occupational health unit (OHU) isn't represented in either the people board or the well-being board. Instead, OHU data is sent to the (acting) well-being lead who then presents generic information to the people board.

The force isn't using up-to-date information to identify threats and risks to the workforce and to develop approaches to improve well-being. The force told us that it last carried out a well-being survey in 2023. It presented the results in the local people plans but didn't develop them into a force plan. The force decided not to carry out a survey in 2024. It will carry out the next all-staff survey sometime in 2025.

At the time of our inspection there was a vacancy for the role of well-being lead. As a result, other [personnel](#) were taking on some of this work, but they lacked the capacity to focus on well-being issues. Officers and staff told us that some well-being challenges weren't being addressed as a result. Shortly before our inspection, a superintendent strategic lead for well-being was appointed. They will hold that responsibility alongside their operational role.

The force needs to make sure that its occupational health service effectively supports its workforce's well-being

The force's [occupational health service](#) provides a range of support and interventions for officers and staff.

In the year ending 31 March 2024, South Yorkshire Police had 1,413 referrals to the occupational health unit (OHU). This equates to 24.1 occupational health referrals per 100 employees. This is within the normal range compared to other forces in England and Wales.

The OHU received mixed reviews from the workforce. Those officers who used its services were satisfied with the support they received. But others reported long waits for appointments.

In the 12 months before our inspection, the OHU had vacancies and had been relying on agency staff to cover appointments, which has led to delays. The OHU has 30 full-time roles. At the time of our inspection ten of those roles were vacant, including the force medical examiner.

The OHU hasn't fully met the Occupational Health Foundation Standards, which require 40 separate criteria to be achieved. At the time of our inspection, we found that several of these hadn't yet been met. The [Oscar Kilo](#) Foundation Occupational Health Standards for Police Forces is a set of occupational health standards to make sure that the force supports personnel's health and well-being. The compliance date for meeting these standards was March 2022. Shortly before our inspection, the force had reinstated clinical governance meetings to meet some of the outstanding criteria. The force has introduced a tracker for the foundation and enhanced standards which acts as an improvement plan.

The OHU has a target of providing an appointment within 16 days. The force told us that in February 2025 the average wait time was 35 days. But several officers and staff said that they had to wait much longer for appointments, with some saying that it was around ten weeks before they received support.

The force would benefit from a self-assessment to better understand where it needs to improve its occupational health provision. This would make sure that the workforce receives timely support.

The force needs to better understand why officers and staff, and in particular new recruits, wish to leave the force

During our inspection, we found that the force only had partial processes to interview [officers](#) and [staff](#) who leave the organisation. When the force is made aware that an officer or member of staff is leaving, it sends a questionnaire to the relevant district or department to carry out an interview. Ideally, the process should be independent from the management chain to allow honest, open feedback.

We were told that few people complete exit interviews. As a result, the force doesn't have comprehensive data to help it understand why people are leaving.

In relation to student officers, the force's central assessment and practice educator inspector speaks to all students who submit a leaver's form. This provides some information regarding why they had decided to leave. The force told us that in the 12 months ending 10 February 2025, 45 student officers left South Yorkshire Police.

We found evidence that the force had consulted officers and responded with change to the student officer journey. The force used information from exit interviews, end of course reviews and district command teams to inform a review of the student programme. This resulted in a new timetable, consolidated academic phases and reduced movement between teams.

Several officers we spoke to told us they planned to leave the force because of difficulty achieving a healthy work-life balance. In our workforce survey, we found that 8.4 percent (121 of 1,436 respondents) said they want to leave South Yorkshire Police as soon as possible and 8.2 percent (118 of 1,436 respondents) want to leave within the next 12 months.

The force needs to review and improve processes to monitor [personnel](#) satisfaction and to understand why people leave. It needs to use this improved data and information to identify patterns and trends. This will allow it to better support the workforce. Which in turn should help to improve satisfaction and retention.

The force needs to do more to support the development and career progression of people from under-represented groups

The force has a [positive action](#) strategy but it needs to be clearer how it will achieve its objectives. The force's own police race action plan acknowledges that some of its Black and Black heritage officers and staff feel unsupported, and at times alienated within the organisation.

We found that [officers](#) and [staff](#) from under-represented groups didn't always feel supported to take up opportunities to develop their careers. Some that we spoke to said that diversity and cultural competence is improving. But there is a perception that some leaders in the workforce don't fully understand diversity. This meant that officers and staff weren't confident in approaching some leaders to address issues of inequality caused by diversity.

During our inspection, some officers and staff told us that the force didn't have an inclusive culture. An inclusive culture is one where every member of the workforce feels valued, respected and empowered to contribute regardless of their background. We were told that the force still had some negative behaviours. And we found a disconnect between what force leaders felt prevailing cultures were and what some officers and staff felt them to be. The force needs to reassure personnel that it identifies and challenges those attitudes and behaviours that reduce inclusivity in the workplace.

During our fieldwork, we learned that some members of the workforce don't trust the force to effectively deal with discrimination, bullying and racist behaviour. In our workforce survey circulated from 11 November to 9 December 2024, we found that in the previous 12 months, 13.7 percent of respondents (196 of 1,430 respondents) had felt bullied or [harassed](#) at work in South Yorkshire Police. Of the 196 who felt bullied or harassed, 96 respondents hadn't reported the bullying and 59 only reported the bullying informally.

Line managers should be nurturing an environment of trust and confidence. In focus groups, some of the workforce told us that this wasn't always the case. We also found these opinions in our workforce survey, where 24.6 percent of respondents (353 of 1,436 respondents) felt that their line manager wasn't nurturing an environment of trust and confidence. Only when the workforce is confident to report issues can the force tackle any of this behaviour effectively.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force builds, supports and protects the workforce.

The force provides additional support for those in high-risk roles and following traumatic incidents

The force has assessed which roles it considers high-risk in relation to welfare. The force's OHU provides specialist psychological health surveillance services to individuals who are employed in high-risk roles. The force regularly invites employees in at-risk roles to use this service. This provides the opportunity for early detection of mental health problems and promotes proactive measures, including education, training, and signposting or access to appropriate care.

The screening uses self-reported, clinically validated questionnaires to assess psychological symptoms and well-being hazards. The force encourages employees to complete these assessments but doesn't make it compulsory. The force doesn't monitor whether assessments have been completed and so may not know if officers or staff need support. This means that the force can't always identify well-being issues with officers and staff in high-risk roles. A trained occupational health professional analyses all responses. If they think an individual needs further support, that person is invited to a structured interview.

The force provides a support service called [trauma risk management](#). It offers this welfare-led assessment to first responders after they attend or deal with a traumatic incident. We found that among officers and staff there is good understanding of the services available for obvious, one-off traumatic events, such as sudden deaths or road collisions. But services for cumulative trauma caused by repeated exposure to traumatic work aren't as well understood, and therefore take-up is low.

The force gives effective support to officers and staff who were assaulted or were victims of hate abuse. Operation Hampshire is a nationwide strategy that helps police forces understand, support and respond more effectively to assaults on police officers and staff. Within the force, governance is via the Operation Hampshire gold meeting, chaired by an assistant chief constable. Force analysts produce a weekly Operation Hampshire report that details relevant incidents over the previous seven days. It is used to review the service provided to assaulted officers and staff and to make sure that the key principles of Operation Hampshire are being appropriately applied.

The force uses the data it gathers under Operation Hampshire to identify ways to reduce the risk to officers and staff. During our inspection we saw it identify and review an increase in spitting incidents targeting officers. This led to the force issuing spit guards to operational staff and custody units, which has reduced such assaults on both officers and staff.

Following the disorder that took place in Rotherham in August 2024, the force put extra support in place for officers who were physically or emotionally affected by the incident. It temporarily appointed a well-being lead for the recovery from the disorder and obtained counselling, physiotherapy and other forms of support from external services. The additional help was made available to all staff and publicised in a special edition of the force's well-being magazine SYP&Me. We spoke to officers and staff both during this PEEL inspection and in our thematic inspection into the police response to the public disorder about the well-being support the force put in place. They told us that the services and support were provided quickly and gave effective support.

The force is improving its systems and processes for personal development reviews

At the time of our inspection, the force was transitioning between two professional development review (PDR) systems. The previous system was withdrawn in the end of 2024 and the new system only introduced in April 2025. During our inspection we spoke to officers and staff about their views on the old PDR system.

The workforce should have formal PDRs with their line managers at least once every 12 months. They should be an effective tool for officers and staff to record and discuss their objectives, achievements, professional development needs and career goals. The reviews are essential for supervisors to understand the development needs of their teams.

Almost all officers and staff we spoke to told us that the old PDR process wasn't helpful. They told us that PDRs weren't referred to in promotion processes or in any other recruitment and selection procedure. Most officers and staff we spoke to didn't value the PDR. They felt it was a box-ticking exercise. In the year ending 31 March 2024, 86 percent of the workforce in South Yorkshire Police had completed an annual performance assessment. But officers and staff told us that they often put the bare minimum information into their PDR so that they and their supervisor could

meet the requirement of submitting it. There was no examination of the quality of PDRs, just a check that they had been completed.

In our workforce survey we found similar opinions. We found that of those who had had a PDR in the past 12 months, only 41.9 percent (408 of 974 respondents) agreed that the PDR was an effective tool in their development. And only 51.1 percent (498 of 974 respondents) said that they valued the review process.

The new PDR system was designed to be more relevant to all officers and staff. It will include a goal setting module and supervisor check-ins. All PDRs will begin and be completed in April each year. Goals and objectives will be consistent, with supervisors able to set and track goals across different tiers (organisational, departmental or team). The force is also going to introduce a quality review process for both goals and the end of year reviews. We hope to see improvements once the new process is fully developed.

The force develops and supports its first-line leaders to effectively support teams and individuals

The force has developed a leadership academy which includes three compulsory leadership programmes. The First Line Leader (for supervisors, team leaders and sergeants), Next Level Leader (for second line leaders and inspectors), and Senior Leader programme (for chief inspectors, superintendents and chief superintendents and staff equivalents). The force also uses psychometric tools to help with self-awareness and personal insight.

The First Line Leader programme is a three-day course and is available to temporary sergeants and others hoping to achieve their first promotion. It is accredited by the College of Policing and the force is now licensed to provide the course to police officers, staff and volunteers.

In addition to these compulsory leadership programmes, the force also provides officers and staff with specific leadership programmes, such as the future leader, personal effectiveness, performance leadership and well-being programmes. Each one contains several short training courses.

The force's organisational development and learning department also provides first-line leaders with a sergeant's development programme that is more operational in nature. There is also a 'day in the life of a sergeant' course for officers and staff who wish to start acting sergeant duties.

During our inspection, we spoke to first-line supervisors and sergeants who told us that the courses were of a good quality and had helped them in the supervision of officers and staff and to carry out their duties as a leader. Sergeants also described the quarterly supervisor training day as relevant and useful.

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All supervisors we spoke to said they felt confident in providing support to their teams. And officers and staff were in general complimentary about the support they received from their immediate supervisors.

Leadership and force management

Adequate

South Yorkshire Police's leadership and management is adequate.

Areas for improvement

The force should make sure its governance processes support a consistent approach to providing services and managing performance

During our inspection, we found the force was focused on improving performance and that this was producing positive results. But we found inconsistent performance in some of the areas we inspected. [Officers](#) and [staff](#) reported concerns that local processes were leading performance. These weren't always clearly aligned with force priorities and created some inconsistencies.

The force has four separate districts, and each has different processes for the management and allocation of work. For example, the force has a crime allocation policy, but we found it didn't give decision makers clear guidance. This has created inconsistencies in the approach taken to investigating crimes. Some districts create different teams to deal with their crime demand. This also creates difficulties in measuring and managing performance effectively. Which could lead to unintended consequences, such as the public receiving varying levels of service in each district. Strategic leaders need to address this.

The force needs to make sure that senior leaders have effective oversight of force performance by making sure that its strategic plans and priorities align with all departmental plans and operational models. The force should also review its performance management framework to make sure it clearly aligns with its strategic plans so they are informed by accurate and trustworthy data.

The force needs to make sure that its senior leaders are more visible and connected with the workforce

During our inspection, we found [chief officers](#) were committed to communicating with the workforce in a variety of ways on a regular basis. But [staff](#) and [officers](#) in each district and various departments told us that they didn't see their senior leaders regularly. Some told us that they felt disconnected with senior leaders and they weren't being listened to when raising issues of concern to them.

Effective police leadership is important to make sure the force has a well-led, fully informed and a motivated workforce who perform well. Improving communication with the workforce will make sure they understand the reasons for strategic decisions and what the force's plans are. The workforce will then be more able to help achieve them.

The force should make sure all staff and officers have access to senior leaders who are visible on a regular basis and work with them in a meaningful way. By improving how it listens to its people, the force will get a better understanding about issues that affect performance. This will help it to make improvements in a consistent and sustainable way across all areas of the force.

Innovative practice

The force has a sophisticated analytics process which helps it predict future demand and develop its long-term plans and strategies

The force has an effective approach to help it understand and predict future demand through its 'futures thinking' process. This combines force data with other external information which it uses to inform its long-term planning and strategies. For example, the force uses data on new housing developments to predict the demands created from them, and their effect on future traffic congestion which could affect force performance.

The force uses this insight to inform other strategic planning processes, such as the [force management statement \(FMS\)](#). The FMS is a self-assessment that each force prepares and submits to us each year. We found the FMS had a good level of data to support its statements, assumptions and projections about the current and future risks it had identified. This is important data as it helps the force to understand its current position and to make plans for the future.

By predicting the needs of growing communities and changes to the local infrastructure, the force can make strategic decisions about when and where to invest its resources and develop its estate and vehicle fleet plans. This allows the force to make efficient workforce plans and make sure it can build capacity in the right areas. This will make sure it has a workforce that is equipped to meet its community's needs now and in the future.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to leadership and management.

The force is working with the mayor's office and its communities to help improve its services, but needs to improve how it produces its data

The force has developed new strategic plans that consider the Mayor's Police and Crime Plan. It will be ready to publish these strategies once finalised. The force told us it plans to clearly communicate the new plans to the workforce and make sure they are all understood. The force also told us it is reviewing the governance structures and performance management framework to make sure they all clearly align with the new objectives.

The force produces high-quality performance data. This gives senior leaders the information they need to make informed decisions. This data supports the management of daily operations. The force also produces traditional performance packs to help oversee force performance through its various governance boards.

While these insights are valuable, leaders can also access management information data through dashboards that can be tailored to specific needs from the force level down to individual officers. But at the time of our inspection, the dashboards lacked some information due to problems with accessing data from individual systems. Having a single data source would allow the data to be presented better.

We also found the force has several processes that rely on manual data collection. While the performance data is of good quality, producing it in this way is inefficient. For example, we found individual teams often used spreadsheets. And we found processes where data was manually transferred between separate systems which is time-consuming. To improve efficiency, the force must prioritise upgrading systems that have the greatest effect on data access. It should also replace manual processes with automated systems to produce and present high-quality data more effectively.

The force has a strong focus on improving the productivity of its resources and evaluating the benefits from its investments

The force has invested in its ability to understand the productivity of its resources and identify processes where it can make continual improvements. For example, the force tracks improvements that it has made and gave us data that showed it had made time savings equivalent to about 37 full-time staff and officers.

The force also evaluates the benefits gained from its projects and organisational change. Post-implementation reviews are an important stage of project management. They compare the expected benefits with those actually gained. This helps the force to learn from successful change and identify areas for further improvement. The force was able to show it has effective processes in place to understand if its changes have offered value for money and what efficiencies or savings it made.

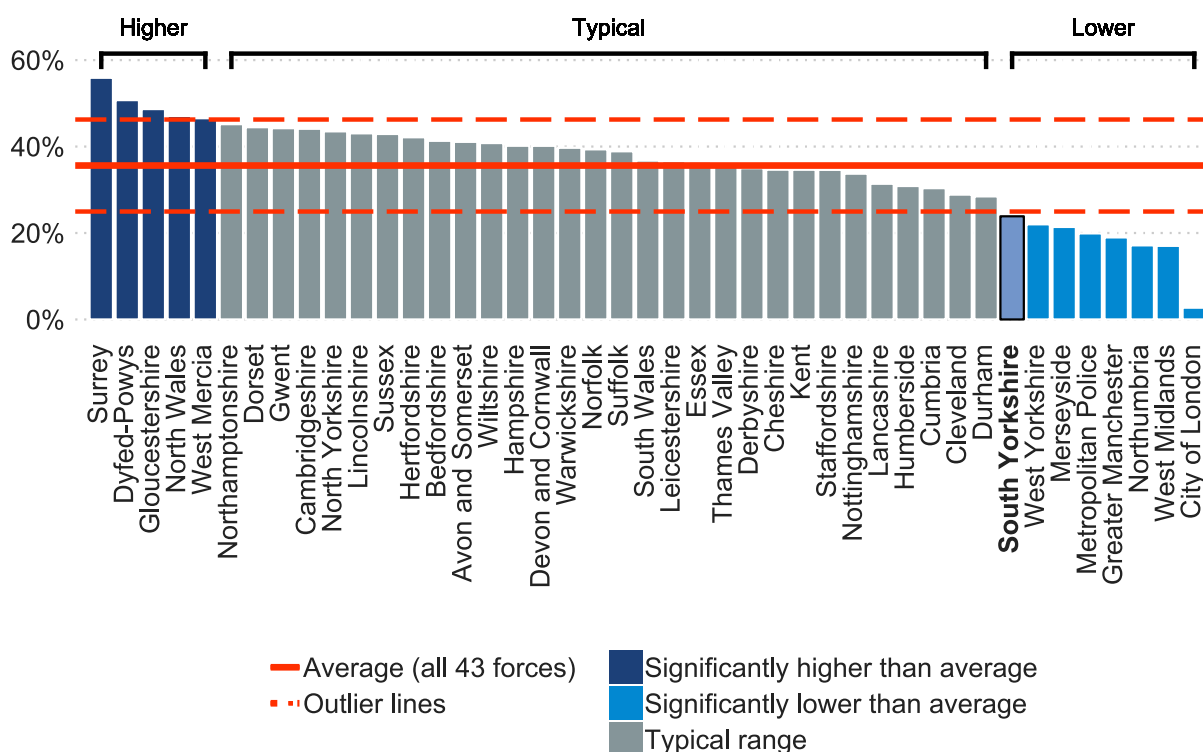
But we also found the force needs to make greater use of technology where it can to replace manual and time-consuming processes. For example, Robotic Process Automation can complete some repetitive tasks which would allow the workforce to be more productive and focus on other priority work. This would reduce some internal demands and help the force to be more efficient.

The force's financial plans, including its investment programme, are affordable and will support it in meeting future demands

The force effectively manages its finances, with forecasts in the mid-term financial strategy based on realistic assumptions about future funding and current expenditure. The force uses a [priority-based budgeting](#) model to help oversee and manage its budgets. This should help find areas where it can make savings to help balance budgets or to invest in other priority areas. The force uses priority-based budgeting successfully and was able to exceed its initial savings targets. Over the 3 periods to 2024/25, the force aimed to save £5.9 million but actually saved £7.4 million. This shows the force has effective processes in place to help control expenditure and to manage its budgets.

According to the latest Home Office Police Funding data, in the financial year 2024/25, the force received £355.3 million in funding. This is in line with other forces in England and Wales and is equivalent to £252,000 per 1,000 population. The force receives a core grant from central government and local revenue raised through the council tax precept. In the financial year 2023/24, the local precept contributed £99 million to the force's total budget. This is 23.9 percent of the total funding available to the force and is below the average amount forces receive from the local precept. The force received help from a 5.5 percent rise in the precept for 2024/25, which is an increase of £13 per band D property. The force used this to help maintain its services and to support capital investment in its buildings and ICT systems.

Figure 3: Precept funding as a proportion of total funding by forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2024



Source: Data collection and analysis from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

Despite the rise in precept and the savings already made, the force estimates it will have a budget deficit of £5.3 million in 2025/26 that will rise to £14.8 million in 2026/27. The force plans to cover these deficits with savings and efficiencies and the use of reserves. Reserves fall into two categories: a general reserve, and earmarked reserves that are held for specific purposes. The force plans to maintain a general reserve of approximately 5 percent of the force's net revenue budget. In the financial year 2023/24 this amounted to £16.2 million to cover its risks and is considered an adequate amount.

But the force predicts budget deficits in future financial years beyond those mentioned above. The force told us it will use earmarked reserves to support the revenue budget as needed, but these reserves will be empty by 2028/29. Another financial challenge is the accounting issues reported by the South Yorkshire Mayor last year. This involved unpaid repayments for capital borrowing. While the force is developing plans to address these issues, we are concerned about the overall financial pressures the force is facing. But we are encouraged by the preparations and planning it has already made. This includes developing options that it could use to make additional savings. These will make sure it can have a balanced budget in future years while making sure it can continue to provide an adequate level of service to the public of South Yorkshire.

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