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MAYOR
OF SOUTH YORKSHIRE

South Yorkshire
Mayoral Combined Authority
11 Broad Street West
Sheffield, S1 2BQ

28 May 2025

To: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

Dear Chief Inspector,

Response from Oliver Coppard, South Yorkshire's Mayor, to the HMICFRS report: An inspection into how effectively the police investigate crime

I welcome the findings and recommendations of the report. Effective investigation of all crime types is fundamental to public trust and confidence in policing, and is something which the public should be able to reasonably expect. The focus on volume crime, particularly neighbourhood offences such as burglary and vehicle crime, is one which resonates with South Yorkshire communities. We have repeatedly seen these crimes highlighted through surveys and engagement activity.

I was pleased to see the report acknowledged the challenges faced by policing, specifically in relation to the ability to conduct quality investigations against a backdrop of competing and complex demand, resourcing challenges, and a relatively inexperienced workforce. Whilst the recommendations detailed in the report are pertinent, sufficiently skilled resource remains a key component in the ability of forces to improve investigation quality and timeliness.

In South Yorkshire, we serve a larger population than a number of forces, and the joint highest number of crimes per FTE Police Officer nationally. As such, adequate resourcing is key within our region.

I will continue to work with the government to ensure that funding and resources are allocated equitably and in line with need. However, there would be significant benefit to holding a discussion with HMICFRS and other key stakeholders, with a focus on how we might be able to address some of the challenges faced by the police in investigating crime effectively. Key to ensuring the strategy is delivered effectively is establishing how we successfully attract and retain investigators, as well as exploring how technology can be utilised to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of investigations.

The recommendations detailed in the report have been accepted by the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police. As the Mayor with PCC responsibilities in South Yorkshire, I have clear oversight of the implementation of these recommendations (as appropriate to South Yorkshire) through local governance arrangements.

(Recommendation 1) By 31 March 2026, the National Police Chiefs' Council, working with the College of Policing, should produce a model to help forces better assess and understand their crime-related demand. This should include an assessment of future demand.

When producing this model, they should consider the complexity involved in investigations. As soon as practicable after the model has been introduced, chief constables should use it to help them determine the number of investigators their forces need to meet their crime-related demand.

I agree with this recommendation in principle. An accurate and evidence-based model of crime-demand is essential so forces may understand their ability to meet investigative resourcing requirements, both now and in the future. However, any such model needs to enable police forces to have the flexibility to build in emerging demand, both locally and nationally.

Forces are doing their best to balance responsiveness against effectiveness in what is becoming an increasingly challenging landscape. Policing demand is often dynamic in nature, and a centralised formula risks restricting forces' ability to manage that demand effectively and at pace. For this recommendation to succeed, there would need to be careful consideration across a number of areas, which differ across forces – differences in IT capability, rates and types of crime, and levels of investigative resource and experience, to name a few.

(Recommendation 3) By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure their force has an effective and efficient end-to-end process to deal with online reports of crime.

The process should remove all unnecessary delays in recording, assessing and allocating crime reports, and make sure the force consistently complies with its requirements under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

I am supportive of this recommendation. We see a variety of methods of crime reporting now being used by the public in South Yorkshire, including the use of Single Online Home which provides digital access to the Police. The offer of a variety of contact methods,

including online reporting, is welcome. The spectrum of provision allows people to use a variety of contact methods dependent on their needs at the time of reporting. The key to the recommendation succeeding is ensuring the services offered to the public meets their needs.

(Recommendation 4) By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure the end-to-end process for receiving, assessing and allocating reports of crime in their force minimises delays in the investigation process and the length of time before investigators contact victims.

I agree with this recommendation. I will continue to utilise my existing governance arrangements to monitor performance and progress, including monitoring compliance with the Victims Code of Practice. My Police and Crime Plan (2025-2029) has cross-cutting themes focused on putting victims and communities at the heart of everything we do and working in partnership to improve outcomes for everyone. Adequate policing resource plays a critical role here, as demand can often exceed the capacity required to deal with reports of crime, as well as the availability of investigators to respond quickly. To ensure the effectiveness of the recommendation, it is important to fully understand the resourcing picture at a local level and its ability to meet the demand it faces.

(Recommendation 5) By 31 December 2025, chief constables should design and operate a policy that results in their force allocating to investigators crimes that are commensurate with each investigator's level of training, accreditation and experience.

I agree with this recommendation. In particular, it is encouraging to see the highlighted importance of all officers and staff involved having an investigative mindset and needing to act as investigators from the outset. Maintaining investigative standards is critical for all crime types, including volume crime. However, it is important to acknowledge that the designing the type of policy detailed in this recommendation is reliant on each force having the required level of resources, with the correct level of training, accreditation, and experience.

Police forces, including South Yorkshire, have a relatively inexperienced workforce in areas such as response and neighbourhood policing, where officers are often at the fore when dealing with volume crime. Consequently, there are fewer officers, including supervisors, with the level of training and experience that can be relied on for day-to-day advice and mentorship.

I fully support the work of my Chief Constable and her team who continue to explore opportunities to attract, recruit, and retain investigative resources, and welcome participation in any discussions taking place at a national level.

(Recommendation 6) By 30 September 2025, chief constables should make sure their force has a clear policy relating to investigation plans. They should make sure their force communicates this policy to officers and staff.

As a minimum, this policy should cover:

- **when to start an investigation plan;**
- **who is responsible for writing the investigation plan;**
- **what to consider including in an investigation plan;**
- **how supervisors should review and approve investigation plans; and**
- **how the force will monitor investigation plans to check their quality, and to make sure investigators and supervisors have followed them.**

I agree with this recommendation. South Yorkshire Police have a focus on investigations through existing governance overseen by a Chief Officer. They have a dedicated Investigations Improvement Group and quality assurance processes focused on investigations, including guidance notes that are embedded into their investigation plan template to support officers and staff through the investigation process. The assessment of vulnerability, safeguarding and appropriate victim support offers, and signposting, are key elements in any investigation. Equally important is capturing the expectations and wishes of the victim, which would be welcomed within the existing policy.

(Recommendation 7) By 30 June 2025, chief constables should include in their investigation policies a direction stating that when an image exists, investigators should search it against the Police National Database and any other relevant databases before their force closes an investigation.

I agree. However, this recommendation is reliant on the consistent use of the Police National Database across all forces. The application is crucial when searching images, but also more widely as part of investigative processes, including the management and sharing of intelligence and other information to support the prevention and detection of crime and make communities safer. Consistent use of the Database is important for all investigations, including volume crime.

(Recommendation 9) By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure the first supervisory review of a crime investigation takes place early enough for the supervisor to be able to:

- **review any actions taken, including those to assess and manage risk;**
- **make sure the investigator has put in place the appropriate support for victims, and is complying with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime;**
- **set or approve an investigation plan;**
- **review the investigator's caseload; and**
- **set a date for a further review.**

I agree with this recommendation. However, it is important to highlight that the quality of investigations relies on effective end-to-end supervision beyond just the early stage. Supervision needs to be maintained throughout any investigation, irrespective how long it may take to conclude. Supervisors need to conduct reviews which are consistently high quality to ensure that important elements, such as compliance with the Victim Code of Practice, are delivered.

(Recommendation 10) By 31 March 2026, chief constables should:

- **make sure any member of staff who has a role in supporting the investigation process completes the College of Policing 'Introduction to investigation' learning programme;**
- **satisfy themselves that the content of their force's ongoing investigative training for responders is designed to develop their investigative skills and performance, and to improve outcomes for victims, and that their force gives responders protected time to complete this training;**
- **make sure their force focuses sufficiently on case file preparation when providing professionalising investigations programme level 1 training, while taking into account local procedures and case management systems;**
- **make sure their force gives officers and staff continuing professional development opportunities about preparing case files;**
- **make sure their force keeps accurate records of professionalising investigations programme level 2 accredited officers and staff, and that those officers and staff**

complete annual continuing professional development to maintain their accreditation, which forces should also accurately record; and

- **review the investigative training their force gives to supervisors, making sure it equips them to oversee and direct crime investigations effectively.**

I agree with this recommendation. South Yorkshire Police have invested in training officers on investigation standards, including file quality, and we have seen incremental improvements in recent months. I will continue to seek assurance from the Chief Constable on the progress made.

(Recommendation 11) By 30 September 2025, chief constables should establish and implement a process to monitor the proportion of recorded crime that their force allocates for investigation. This should include a process to make sure a decision not to allocate a crime for investigation is appropriate.

I agree with this recommendation in principle. We have seen positive outcome rates steadily decrease over a number of years, impacted by workforce numbers and changing demand, including what is an increasingly complex crime picture. I see first-hand in South Yorkshire the challenge of balancing competing demand and priorities. We have high levels of recorded crimes, such as residential burglary and vehicle crime, both of which have a significant impact on victims. Victims of such crimes quite rightly expect to see reasonable lines of enquiry pursued to provide the best chance of their crime being resolved, and a reduction in the likelihood of the crime being repeated.

In South Yorkshire attendance at residential burglaries is consistently over 90%. However, the reality is that Chief Constables have a finite resource, which can impact on their ability to investigate all crime, in particular volume crime. It is critical that forces understand their local priorities and demand picture, and in doing so approach all crimes with a view to identifying and following all reasonable lines of enquiry, as well as ensuring the victim receives the appropriate level of service and support.

Commenting more broadly on the report, I am pleased that both South Yorkshire Police and my office are involved in national working groups focused on helping to drive local improvements in respect of investigation standards in relation to compliance with the Victim Code of Practice. Compliance is one key aspect of ensuring relevant stakeholders are meeting the needs of victims and witnesses. However, there is always more that we can and should do. Our governance arrangements in South Yorkshire include a strong

focus on investigation standards, and I will continue to monitor progress through my existing assurance mechanisms.

I have copied this letter to the Home Secretary for her information.

I look forward to working with you both to keep people safe across South Yorkshire.

Best,

Oliver Coppard

South Yorkshire's Mayor