

**An inspection into how effectively the police investigate crime. Response from Simon Foster, Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands.**

The inspection report, released on 27 March 2025, presents findings from fieldwork conducted between May and July 2024. The review covered seven police forces, to evaluate how effectively they investigate crime, one of the police's fundamental duties. High-quality investigations are fundamental for reducing crime, providing closure to victims, and maintaining public confidence in the police and wider justice system. The inspectorate identified three key actions necessary to meet public expectations: responding to calls promptly, attending incidents within the stated response times, and thoroughly pursuing all reasonable lines of enquiry.

The findings highlight several challenges in how crime is investigated and how victims are supported. It is important to note, that this inspection focused solely on volume crime. Despite the dedication of officers and staff, efforts were often undermined by systemic inefficiencies and flawed investigative processes. The inspectorate's findings underline the need for improvements, including enhanced training, better allocation of resources, and a shift towards quality-focused victim support rather than target-driven performance. The inspection led to eleven recommendations, eight of which require action by Chief Constables, to address these challenges and improve outcomes for victims.

Among its recommendations, the inspectorate highlighted several case studies, notably the innovative use of body-worn video technology, by West Midlands Police (WMP). This technology allows police supervisors to track officer and staff locations, via a digital map and communicate with them during investigations. Livestreaming through body-worn cameras, enhances both the efficiency and accuracy of evidence collection. For example, the ability to capture screenshots and record real-time footage, ensures critical information is preserved and acted upon swiftly, accelerating investigations and improving case outcomes.

The inspectorate also acknowledged WMP dedication, to raising investigative standards through regular Quality Assurance Thematic Testing (QATT) reviews. Conducted monthly, these reviews assess supervisory oversight, timeliness, and the overall effectiveness of investigations. This structured and consistent process, establishes a benchmark for high-quality investigative work. Additionally, the inspectorate praised WMP for cultivating a culture of investigative excellence. During fieldwork, a supervisor noted that chief officers had effectively communicated the importance of delivering high-quality investigations across the force. This

clear messaging ensures that all officers and staff understand their roles and responsibilities, reinforcing a culture of accountability and professionally.

The following sections outline the steps WMP is already taking, to address the inspectorate's specific recommendations to Chief Constables:

**'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'**

WMP is currently in the implementation phase of introducing the Crime Desk, to enhance efficiency where physical attendance is not required. This streamlined process, guarantees that a crime number is provided within 24 hours, followed by an appointment with an investigator. This allows for an initial investigation to be completed, assessing further allocation, progression, and closure. By reducing the reliance on physical attendance for crimes that can be effectively investigated remotely, WMP can allocate resources more competently, ensuring frontline officers focus on incidents requiring immediate attention.

Furthermore, to mitigate inefficiencies associated with the default delivery of online reports, via PDF attachments from the Digital Public Contact (DPC) Single Online Home (SOH) service, WMP has developed an automated tool to import these reports directly into force systems, rather than manually inputting. This automation saves time, by eliminating the need for manual data entry, which can be a slow and labour-intensive process. This reduces human errors, speeds up the recording process, and ensures reports are available for assessment and allocation much faster.

**'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'**

Crime allocation procedural guidance is embedded within the WMP Investigation Policy, this ensures timely assignment of cases where further lines of enquiry are identified, following a foundation investigation. This policy ensures that crimes must be allocated to an officer within 48 hours. To further streamline the workflow, crimes are efficiently processed from creation to allocation through established channels, which then assigns them to the appropriate officer for investigation. This structured approach eliminates unnecessary delays, ensuring swift progression of cases.

**'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'**

To achieve this, WMP classifies crimes into broad categories, to determine the appropriate level of expertise required for further investigation. Low-risk, high-volume crimes are handled by Response and Neighbourhood Teams, while crimes of greater risk and complexity are allocated to specialist investigation teams. This structured approach, ensures efficient resource allocation and that cases are investigated with the necessary level of expertise. All specialist departments, mandate that investigators hold specific accreditations, ensuring officers possess the appropriate skills, for complex investigations. Additionally, further specialist training is required for specific roles. The delivery and compliance of these training requirements, are systematically tracked, to maintain professional standards.

**‘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’**

The WMP investigation policy outlines when an investigation plan is required, assigns responsibility for completion, and sets expectations for timeliness. To support effective investigations, WMP has developed an investigation plan template, incorporating the required recommendations alongside additional guidance, to enhance the investigative progress. To maintain oversight, the number of outstanding investigation plans is tracked regularly. Additionally, WMP has made significant improvements in compliance, regarding investigations timeliness and qualitative assessments are integrated into the monthly QATT assessments.

**‘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’**

WMP actively uses image searches, to identify offenders of crime and has achieved great success from Police National Database (PND) tools, that assist with this practice. However, at present, the mandated use of PND image checking does not feature within WMP’s investigation policy. This will formally be written into the policy when it is next updated.

**‘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’**

WMP has an automated supervisory review template, which includes details featured in this recommendation above, as well as additional information. All supervisors attend a mandatory training

session, which provides direction on the requirements of a supervisor review, to raise awareness of the importance of carrying out reviews and how these drive outcomes of investigations. Compliance with the Victims' Code is a key commitment in my Police and Crime Plan, and I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account, to ensure that victims' rights are complied with.

**'By 31 March 2026, chief constables are tasked with ensuring all staff involved in investigations complete the College of Policing's 'Introduction to Investigation' programme and that responders receive ongoing training designed to improve their skills, performance, and victim outcomes, with protected time allocated for this. They must also prioritise case file preparation in professionalising investigations programme (PIP) level 1 training, ensure staff have access to ongoing development opportunities for case file preparation, maintain accurate records of PIP level 2-accredited staff, and ensure these officers complete annual development requirements'**

The National Policing Curriculum for Investigations is embedded into all new recruit entry routes, ensuring that specified learning outcomes are met throughout the training programme. This structured approach integrates investigative principles at various stages, to provide a solid foundation for new officers. Case file preparation is a key focus across all entry route programmes, ensuring alignment with case management systems. The curriculum incorporates assessments and learning opportunities, allowing officers to develop practical skills in case file preparation.

All newly promoted sergeants are mandated to attend the Operational Excellence Programme, a five-day face-to-face training course, covering core supervisory responsibilities in overseeing and directing crime investigations. For existing supervisors, WMP has implemented a structured programme of Supervisor Masterclasses, providing Continuing Professional Development, that focuses on overseeing and directing crime investigations effectively. Through these initiatives, WMP is showing commitment in equipping officers and supervisors, with the necessary skills and resources, to strengthen investigative standards and improve outcomes for victims.

**'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'**

WMP has implemented significant changes, to ensure that all recorded crimes receive appropriate investigative consideration. In January 2024, WMP removed its 'Investigations Proportionality Test', eliminating predetermined thresholds for investigation and ensuring, each case is assessed on its individual merits. This change also included disabling automated crime filing through an algorithm, replacing it with a human-led assessment for every crime recorded.

To support officers and staff in making informed investigative decisions, Operation Vanguard developed the EVOLVES framework. This approach shifts the focus away from severity-based decision-making and instead fosters a culture of thorough investigation, rather than premature case closure. This framework aims to empower officers to make common-sense decisions, regardless of experience and prioritise cases where solvability is achievable.

In conclusion, this inspection underscores the serious need for improvements in how police forces investigate crime and support victims. While challenges remain, the findings clearly show that meaningful progress is possible through strong leadership, innovation, and a commitment to quality. I emphasise that WMP has already taken swift action, to implement the inspectorate's recommendations.

These steps include, streamlining investigative processes, enhancing supervision, investing in modern technology, and strengthening development training. Such measures, reflect a clear and ongoing commitment to raising investigative standards and achieving better outcomes for victims.

I remain firmly committed, to supporting WMP, in driving these improvements forward. I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account, to help restore public confidence and ensure justice is delivered effectively, for victims of crime across the West Midlands.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Foster', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Simon Foster**

**West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner**