

**An inspection of the police response to the public disorder in July and August 2024: Tranche 2: Response from Simon Foster, Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands.**

In response to the widespread unrest and violent disturbances, that impacted numerous towns and cities across the United Kingdom during the summer of 2024, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), undertook a rapid review of the policing response.

The aim was to extract key lessons and offer practical recommendations, to strengthen future strategies for maintaining public order and safety. The review was conducted in two phases.

The latest report builds on the findings of Tranche 1 and presents the outcomes of Tranche 2, published on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025, five months after the initial report. Tranche 2 extends the groundwork laid in the first phase, by broadening the evidence base, to provide a deeper analysis of the policing response to the 2024 unrest. It includes insights from five additional police forces, as well as input from a wider range of regional and national policing bodies.

In addition, Tranche 2 also draws on additional personnel testimonies, operational reviews, and academic research, all of which strengthen its recommendations and contribute to a more comprehensive and informed evaluation of the policing response. The inspectorate found that police forces did not consistently prioritise or effectively manage, intelligence related to public disorder. In particular, they often failed to monitor, gather, or utilise intelligence, in ways that could have anticipated shifts in public sentiment or rising community tensions, factors that contributed to the outbreak of unrest in Southport.

The report also emphasised, the growing threat posed by online content to public order and safety, a trend that has intensified since 2011. Recent public disorder, highlights the need for the police to recognise the value of digital intelligence, in identifying and responding to emerging risks more proactively. On a positive note, the inspectorate observed that most forces responded to offences swiftly and thoroughly. In collaboration with the Crown Prosecution Service and HM Courts & Tribunals Service, their prompt actions to prosecute offenders, played a clear deterrent role during the July 2024 unrest.

In response to these findings, the inspectorate issued three additional key recommendations, directed to the National Police Chiefs' Council, with the involvement and collaboration of Chief Constables:

**Recommendation 1: With immediate effect, the National Police Chiefs' Council and chief constables should create a plan and begin work to improve how the police service collects, analyses and communicates intelligence about disorder.**

The first recommendation, highlights the pressing need, to strengthen intelligence capabilities throughout the police service. Achieving this requires close collaboration between the National Police Chiefs' Council and Chief Constables, to develop structured intelligence frameworks. These frameworks will enable policing bodies to better anticipate threats, coordinate responses more effectively, and uphold public safety. The inspectorate recommends, integrating intelligence gathering into neighbourhood policing, as this can yield valuable insights into community tensions and emerging risks. By embedding intelligence at the local level, the police service will be better positioned to manage disorder and respond to the evolving challenges of public order policing. I support enhanced collaboration among key stakeholders, to create a comprehensive plan, that builds both capacity and capability, through the strategic use of police intelligence.

**Recommendation 2: With immediate effect, the National Police Chiefs' Council and chief constables, working with the Home Office, should create a plan and begin work to better understand and respond to the risk associated with online content.**

The second recommendation, calls for a more comprehensive approach to managing the risks associated with online content. Given the ever-increasing role of digital platforms shaping public attitudes and enabling easy collaboration between individuals, it is essential that police forces have the ability to monitor and respond effectively, to emerging online risks and threats. Another essential step, is reviewing the provisions within the Online Safety Act 2023, to determine whether the existing legislation adequately supports policing efforts in managing online disorder. This recommendation, is important because the online space plays a crucial role in modern communication, making it imperative that policing moves with the technological changes and adapts to effectively address new potential threats.

**Recommendation 3: With immediate effect, the National Police Chiefs' Council and chief constables, working with the College of Policing, should create a plan and begin work to improve how the police service investigates offences associated with large-scale disorder.**

The third recommendation, underscores the need for a more structured and proactive approach to investigating offences, arising from large-scale disorder. A key element, is revising the Strategic Policing Requirement for public order and safety, to clearly define the range of investigative resources available during such events. I support the development, of a national standardised investigation plan, which would provide all forces with a consistent and coordinated strategy, for managing disorder-related offences. This approach would enhance operational efficiency, ensure accountability, and promote fairness across

jurisdictions. I endorse this recommendation because, effective and timely investigations are vital, not only for delivering justice, but also for deterring future unrest and maintaining public confidence in the police.

In conclusion, I commend the commitment, dedication and professionalism, shown by West Midlands Police, during the public disorder of summer 2024. Their efforts were instrumental, in protecting communities across the West Midlands and upholding public safety throughout the region.

However, the findings in Tranche 2 of the inspection highlight clear areas for improvement, particularly in the collection and use of intelligence, the understanding and management of online threats, and the investigation of offences linked to disorder.

These recommendations offer a crucial opportunity, to enhance policing practices nationwide. I remain fully committed to supporting this work. Strengthening the response to public disorder is essential, not only for building safer, more resilient communities, but also for safeguarding the police workforce who serve them.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Foster', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Simon Foster**

**West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner**