

West Midlands Police HMICFRS Value for Money Analysis – September 2025**Purpose of report**

This paper explores the costs of policing as presented in the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Value for Money (VfM) Profiles for the financial year 2024/25, with a specific focus on West Midlands Police (WMP). This report examines how funding is allocated and spent across police functions, including the various financial streams that support police forces.

Background

HMICFRS publishes publicly accessible Value for Money dashboards, offering comparative data on a wide range of policing activities and spending from 2011 through to the latest release with data for fiscal year 2024/25.

The VfM profiles allows detailed analysis of how much forces spend on different policing activities; how crime levels compare across forces, as well as what outcomes forces achieve; and workforce costs, broken down by role, rank and gender.

It is important to note that these dashboards highlight outliers but do not provide narrative context for the variances observed. There are many reasons why a police force might spend more or less on a particular function than other forces.

Each force operates within a unique environment influenced by a variety of factors, for example, local demographics, deprivation levels and organisational priorities. As such, variances in spending and outcomes should not be interpreted as inefficiency or ineffectiveness.

HMICFRS groups forces into Most Similar Groups (MSGs), clusters of forces with similar crime profiles and socioeconomic characteristics. WMP is grouped with Greater Manchester Police

(GMP), Merseyside (MER), and West Yorkshire Police (WYP). There is currently a review of these MSGs, therefore, they may change in the future.

Some forces carry additional responsibilities, such as managing Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU), these can distort simple financial comparisons. To account for these, HMICFRS removes national function spending using the Police Objective Analysis (POA) dataset.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note:

- the content of the report and the comparative position of the force in relation to the MSGs.
- the proposed use of the profiles are as follows:
 - To review and challenge areas of difference, to use this to assist in funding discussions with the Home Office.
 - To provide context to HMICFRS when considering financial and performance benchmarking issues during the PEEL inspection process.

CONTACT OFFICER

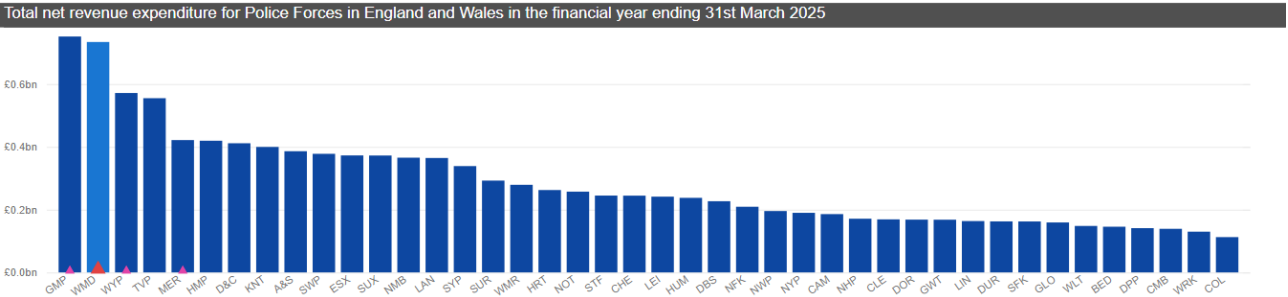
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Value for Money Analysis

Figure 1 shows total net revenue expenditure by force for FY 2024/25. GMP records the highest overall spend, followed closely by WMP at £734.24M. This positions WMP as the second highest spending force in the country (when excluding the Metropolitan Police).

The elevated expenditure is indicative of the resource required to police large, complex urban areas with high crime volumes and wide socioeconomic backgrounds.

Figure 1 – Net revenue expenditure by police force, FY 2024/25



In terms of total financial provision, WMP again ranks second nationally (excluding the Met), with £738.59M allocated for FY 2024/25. There is clear alignment between allocated financial provision and actual spend. (**Figure 2**)

Figure 2 - Total financial provision by police force in FY 2024/25

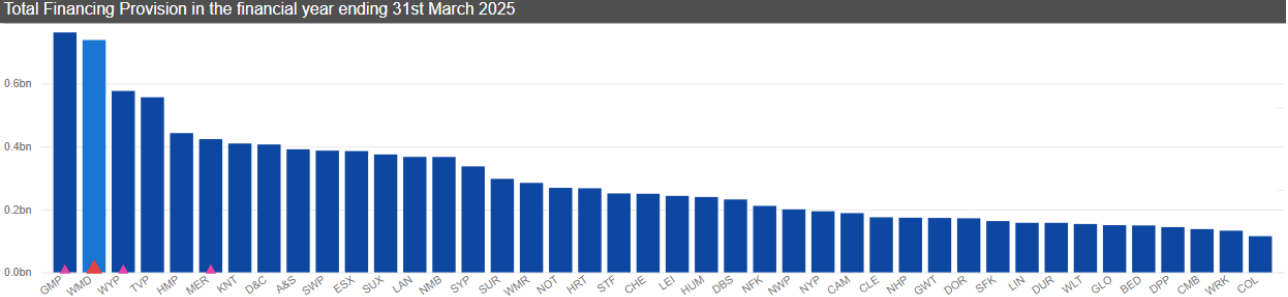
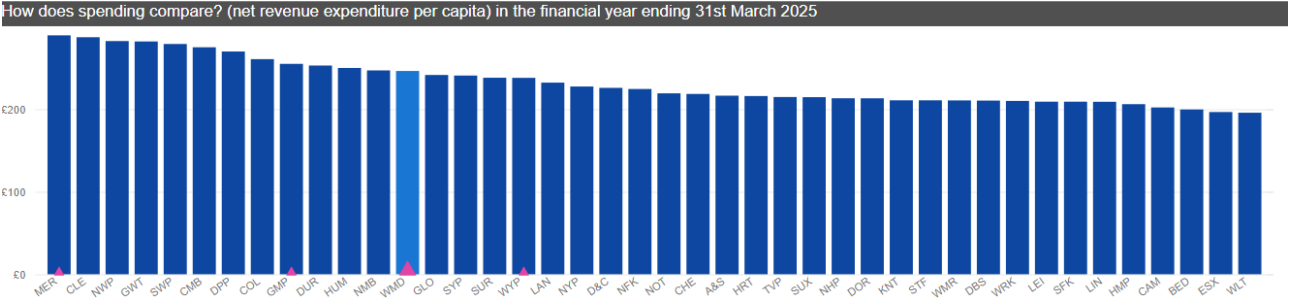


Figure 3 shows a breakdown of net revenue expenditure per capita for 2024/25. WMP drops to a mid-ranking position with £246.31 spent per head, significantly lower than smaller forces such as Cleveland (CLE) and North Wales (NWP).

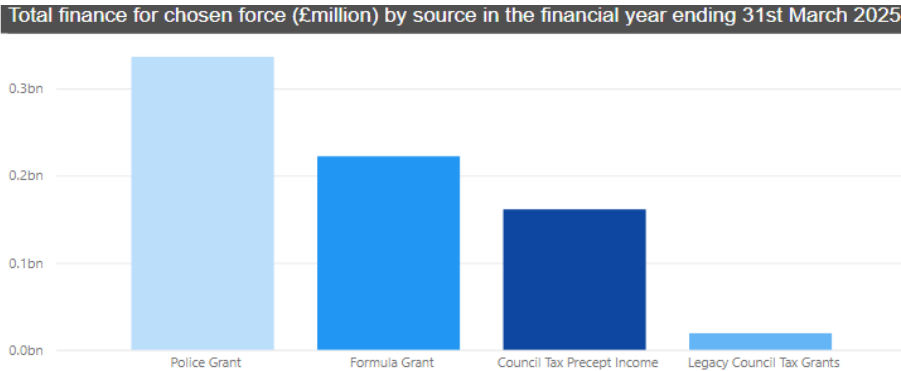
WMP’s lower ranking reflects the challenge of stretching resources across a large and growing population. Nevertheless, the force’s per capita spend increased by £11.06 compared to FY 2023/24, indicating a rise in investment.

Figure 3 - Net revenue expenditure per capita by police force, FY 2024/25



The financial makeup of WMP’s funding varies. Police forces across England and Wales receive funding through four main financial streams: the police grant, the formula grant, the council tax precept, and legacy council tax grants. In FY 2024/25, WMP’s funding breakdown was 45% police grant, 30% formula grant, and 21% precept (**Figure 4**).

Figure 4 – Total finance for WMP, FY 2024/25



WMP receives a significantly larger proportion of its funding from central grants compared to forces with higher local funding. Forces that receive more through the precept tend to have less central funding, and vice versa. This underscores the importance of government grants in supporting urban forces like WMP.

Figure 5 illustrates how across all forces, most functional spending is absorbed by Police Officer and Other Staff costs, a trend WMP mirrors. Compared to MSGs, WMP’s staffing cost ratios align closely, indicating no significant divergence in how staffing costs are distributed across functions.

Figure 5 – How is spending made up across the force, FY 2024/25

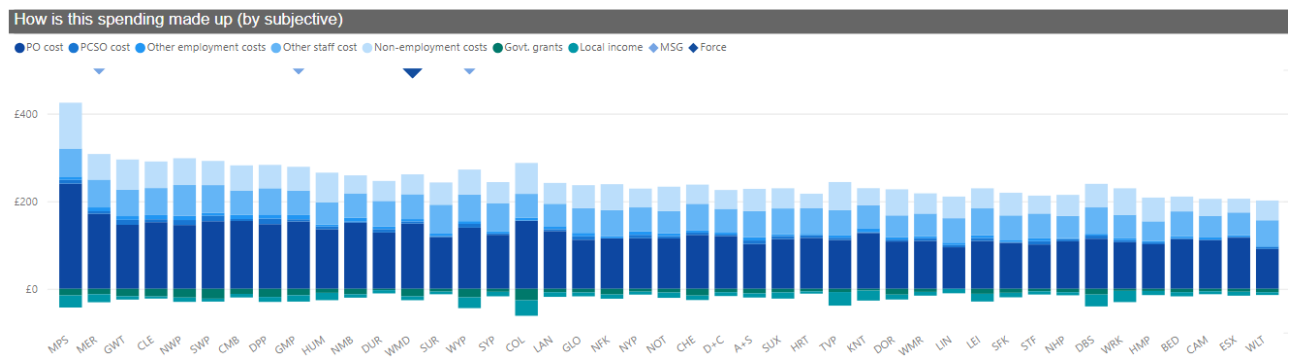


Figure 6 exemplifies staffing levels per 1,000 population. WMP reports 2.58 FTE officers and 1.21 FTE staff per 1,000 people. While WMP ranks relatively high nationally, it is comparatively lower than its MSGs.

Figure 6 – Staffing levels, FTE police officers, staff and PCSOs per 1,000 population, FY 2024/25

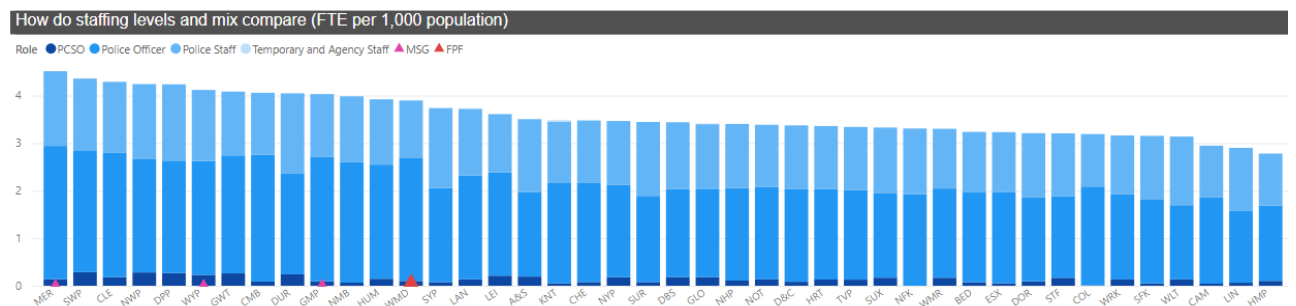


Figure 7 outlines the crime outcomes per officer for FY 2023/24. WMP sits in the middle-to-upper range nationally and compared to it MSGs. These figures show that WMP is broadly achieving results in line with or better than its peers, relative to available resources.

Figure 7 – Total crime and outcomes per police officer, FY 2023/24

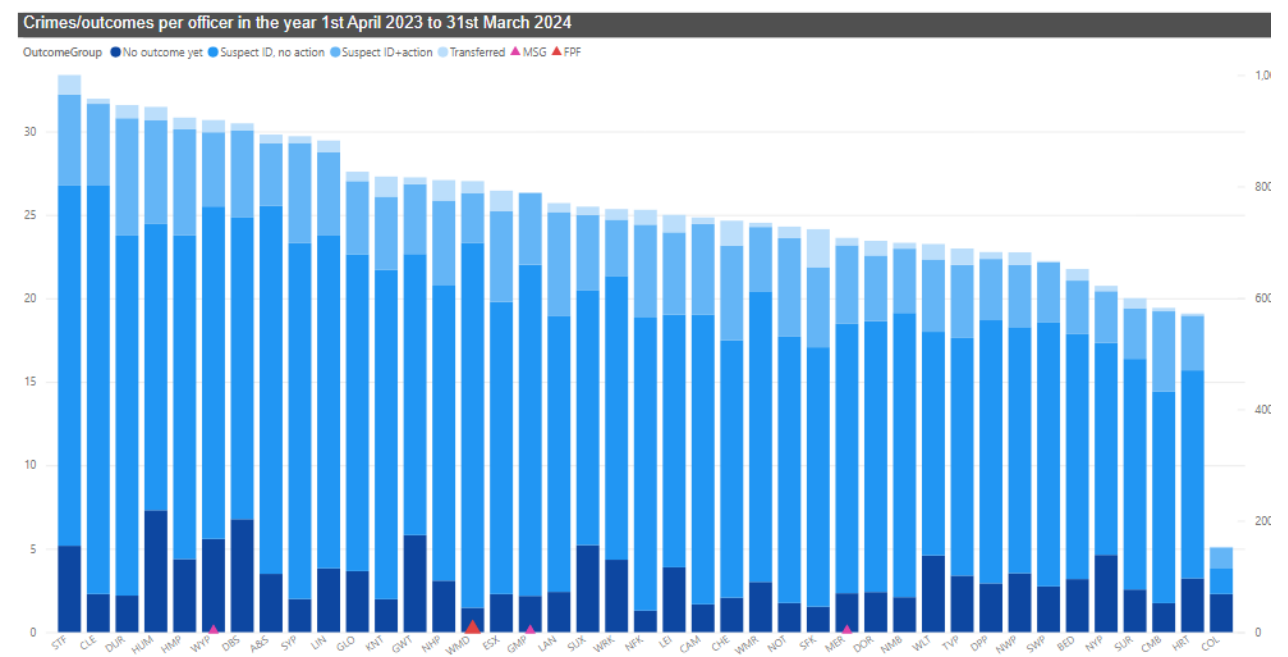
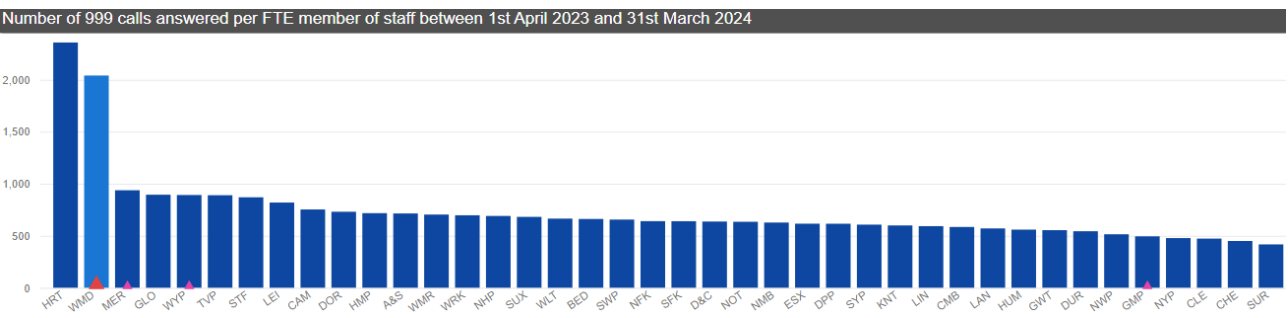


Figure 8 displays the number of 999 calls answered per FTE staff member in FY 2023/24. WMP is the second highest in England and Wales, with each FTE handling over 2,000 emergency calls, ranking above our MSGs and performing in the top nationally.

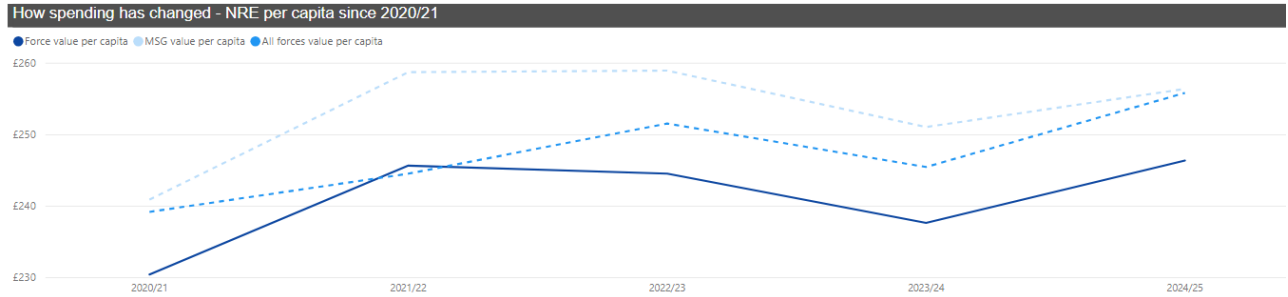
Figure 8 – Total 999 calls answered per FTE member of staff, FY 2023/24



Analysis of outliers

WMP’s per capita spending has consistently been lesser than both the MSG and national averages, therefore presents as an outlier (**Figure 9**). The gap was widest in FY 2023/24 and only partially closed in FY 2024/25. This trend raises questions about long-term sustainability, especially if demand continues to rise or shift towards more resource-intensive work.

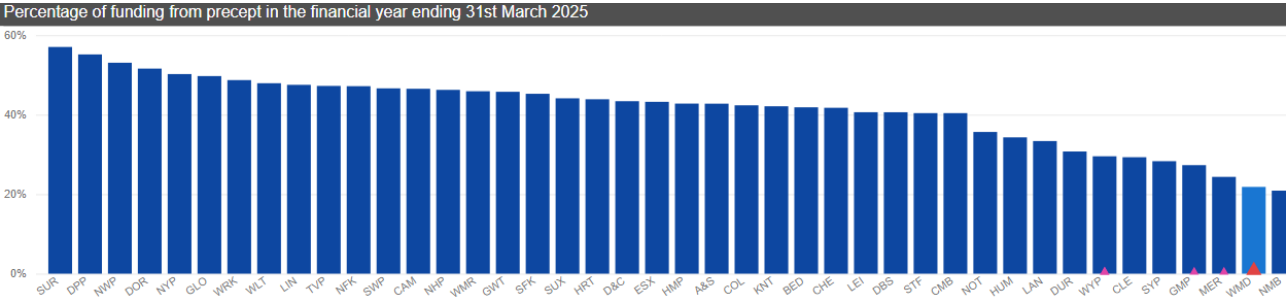
Figure 9 – How spending has changed, per capita compared to MSGs, FY 2024/25



WMP receives the second lowest precept contribution in the country, this is consistent with other MSGs, all of which fall at the lower end of the chart (**Figure 10**). However, WMPs positioning towards the lower end of the chart evidences it as an outlier.

This pattern is explained by regional socioeconomic factors and property values. Areas like the West Midlands have a higher proportion of lower council tax band properties, limiting the revenue-raising capacity of the precept. This reliance on central government funding makes WMP more exposed to changes in national policy.

Figure 10 - Percentage of force funding from the precept, 2024/25



Local Policing is showing as an outlier across a number of sub-objectives and subjective areas. **Figure 11**, shows in FY 2024/25, WMP allocated a higher proportion of its budget to investigations, public protection, and dealing with the public when compared to its MSGs. However, the WMP value for local policing is lower compared to MSG values per capita. For example, WMP spend £54.98 on local policing and MSGs spend £71.76 per capita.

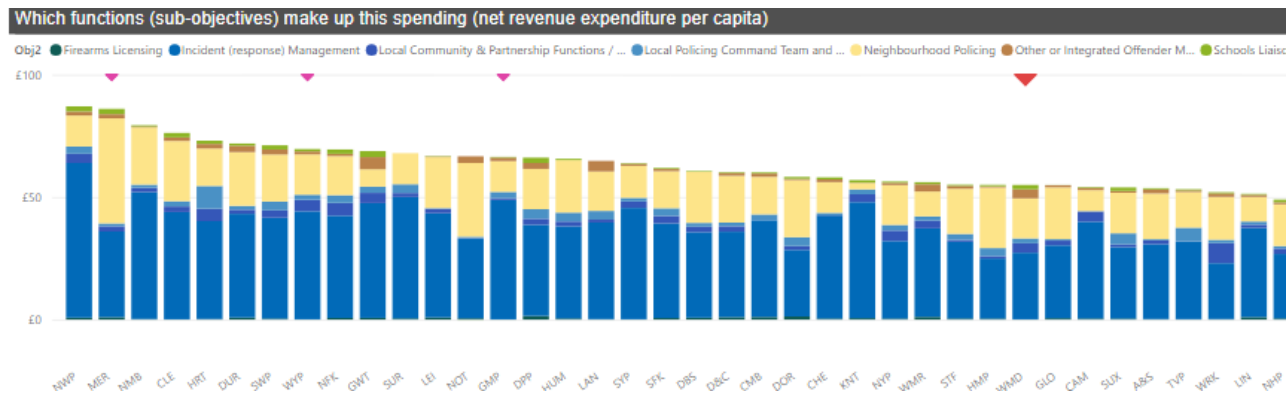
This is consistent with the data return made to central government which formed the basis of the bid for the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, paid to WMP in 2025/26. This provides £12.2M to increase neighbourhood officer strength by 289 officers and 20 PCSOs.

Figure 11 - Per capita spend on headline policing functions by force, benchmarked against MSGS, FY 2024/25

level 1 heading	Force value per capita	MSG value per capita
Support Functions	£59.76	£58.11
Local Policing	£54.98	£71.76
Investigations	£37.75	£31.54
Public Protection	£26.16	£19.64
Dealing With The Public	£20.14	£17.82
Operational Support	£12.19	£12.33
Criminal Justice Arrangements	£11.49	£15.70
Intelligence	£11.01	£11.18
Investigative Support	£7.01	£8.98
Road Policing	£4.80	£4.72
Central Costs	£1.00	£4.57

Figure 12 breaks down expenditure for the Local Policing function of policing. For Local Policing, WMP spends £54.98 per head, with the largest proportion going to Incident Response (£27.22) and Neighbourhood Policing (£16.34). This is markedly lower than MSGs.

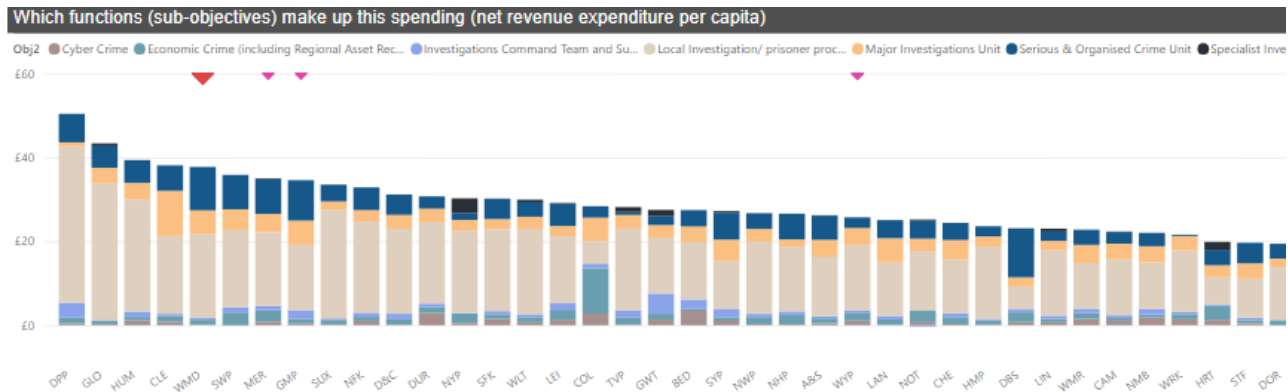
Figure 12 – Local Policing Function Spending, across force areas FY 2024/25



WMPs spending on investigations is the fifth highest nationally. **Figure 13** visualises WMP funding to the Investigations area of policing, WMP allocates £37.75 per capita to Investigations, higher than MSGs, with most going to local investigations and prisoner processing. Spending

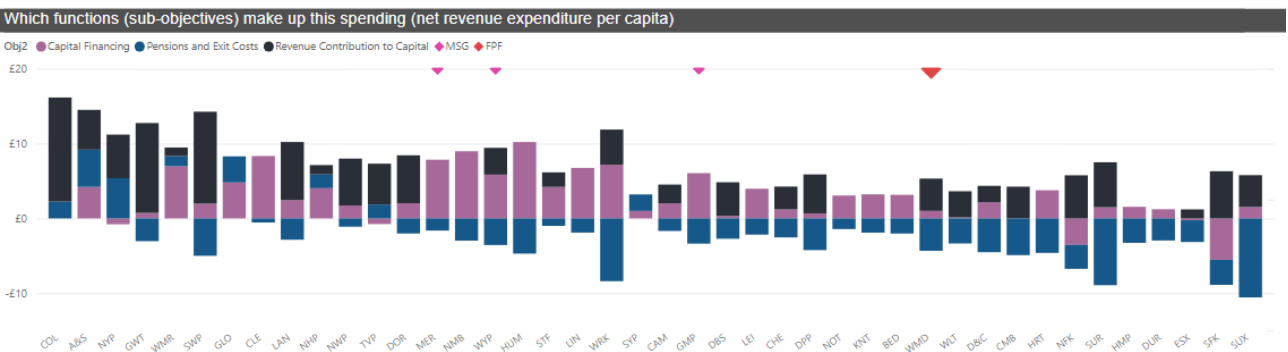
on Serious Organised Crime is also substantial. This supports the force's emphasis on addressing serious and repeat offending.

Figure 13 - Investigations Function Spending, across force areas FY 2024/25



In terms of **centrally managed costs**, pensions and exit costs, WMP are lower in comparison to our MSGs, WMP spend £3.57 less per capita. As evidenced in Figure 15, a high proportion of WMP central costs are spent on pensions and exit costs, proportionally than West Yorkshire and Merseyside. This is consistent with the amounts reported in the statement of accounts and covers a year of restructuring in central departments including People and Organisational Development. We would expect this to be an outlier in 2025/26 as well, with a return to mid-range costs from 2026/27.

Figure 14– WMP Central Costs Spending per capita FY 2024/25



Police officer costs is an explicit outlier, **Figure 15** outlines cost per officer, with WMP spending an estimated £63,190 per full time equivalent (FTE), this is towards the lower end nationally. This should mirror the amount of time officers have spent in service, with officers with fewer years in service being at lower levels on the incremental pay scale. It does also, though, show a proportionate approach to the span of control and management of policing activity.

Figure 15 – Cost per FTE Police Officer, 2024/25

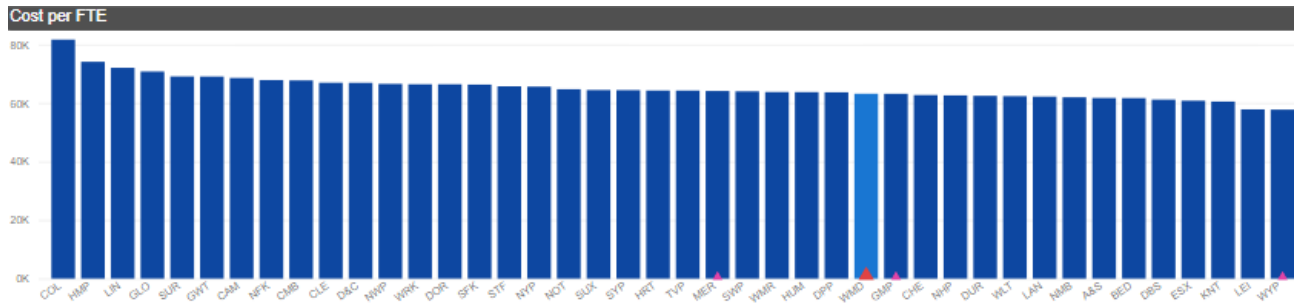
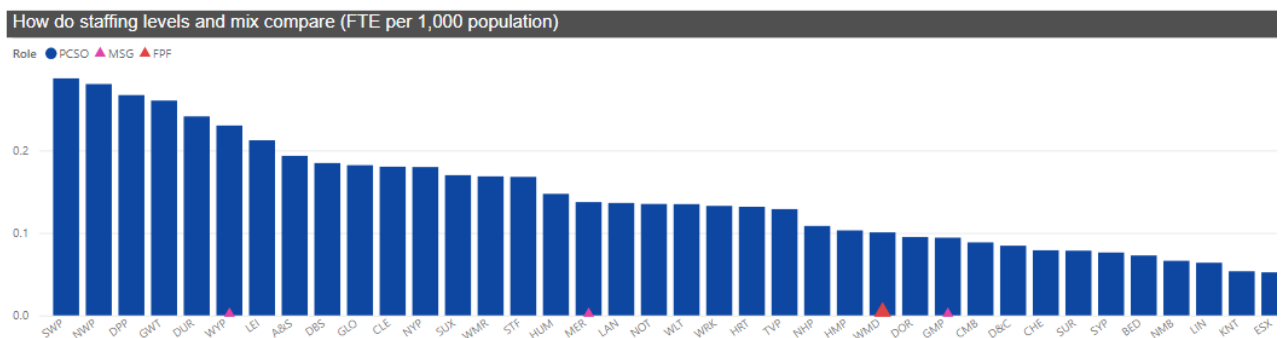


Figure 16 highlights significant variation in **PCSO staffing levels** across the forces. WMP is positioned towards the lower end of the distribution, indicating notably fewer FTE PCSOs per 1,000 compared to most other forces. In comparison to MSGs, WMP falls much shorter than West Yorkshire, which inflates the outlier position even more.

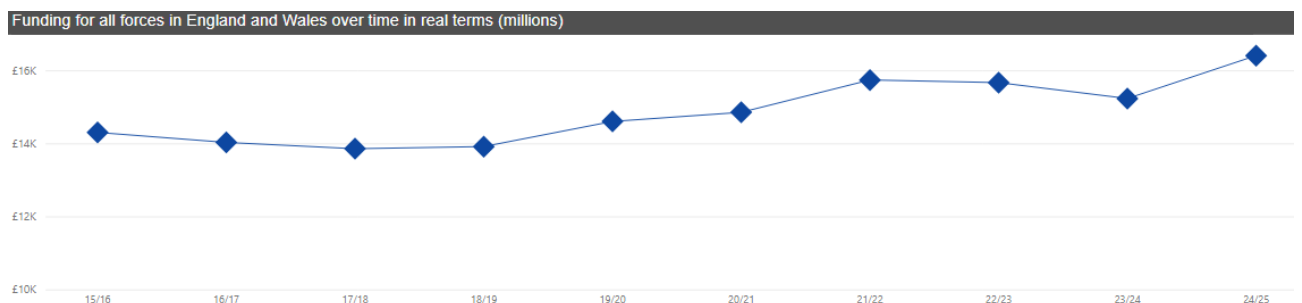
Figure 16 - Staffing levels, FTE PCSOs per 1,000 population, FY 2024/25



The National Picture

The national picture of police funding in England and Wales, as illustrated in figure 17, shows a fluctuating yet generally upward trend in real-terms funding from 2015/16 to 2024/25. This recent peak exemplifies renewed government investment in policing, likely reflecting increased public safety demands and rising operational costs.

Figure 17 – Funding for all forces in England and Wales across a 10 year period



Conclusion

This analysis reveals a complex financial and operational picture for WMP. On one hand, WMP ranks as one of the highest-spending forces nationally in absolute terms, reflective of its large population and the demands of policing a diverse, urban environment. However, its per capita spending remains below both national and MSG averages, over a 5-year period, highlighting a sustained trend.

Nonetheless, several positive areas stand out. WMP demonstrates operational efficiency and strong frontline prioritisation. It allocates a higher share of its resources to key functions such as investigations, public protection, and emergency response. It also handles one of the highest volumes of 999 calls per staff member in the country showing strong emergency service performance despite limited resources. Moreover, officer cost per FTE is relatively low, suggesting efficient workforce management.

Crime outcome efficiency is broadly in line with or better than MSG peers, reflecting reasonable value for money given WMP's financial constraints. Additionally, the force spends a relatively low proportion of officer time on support functions, instead directing its workforce towards frontline duties, enhancing visibility and public trust.

However, WMP demonstrates clear outliers in several key areas, in particular, per capita policing and local policing. These categories consistently appear as outliers, with expenditure levels below MSGs. It is for WMP to consider whether this aligns with their operational demand, and to consider this aspect in their Force Management Statement.

In summary, while WMP faces financial pressures and relies heavily on central government funding, it performs commendably in terms of outcomes, resource targeting, and service delivery. Its outlier status in local policing and PCSO numbers raises questions around its ability to deliver efficient local policing within existing funding. The introduction of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee grant will enable an expansion of this resource, however, as a specific government grant, it further increases the reliance of WMP on central government funding.