



South Yorkshire

POLICE

South Yorkshire Police Race Action Plan

Progress Update:
April 2026





Introduction

In May 2022, the national Police Race Action Plan (PRAP) was launched, having been developed jointly by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing. The plan set out actions to improve policing for Black and Black heritage people who work within forces or come into contact with police officers and/ or police staff.

Building on the foundations of the national plan, we collaborated with our colleagues and communities to develop the South Yorkshire Police Race Action Plan, which was published in October 2024, to address and overcome the issues which affect Black and Black heritage people in South Yorkshire. In our local plan, we committed to delivering a series of actions and to providing six-monthly progress updates.

In September 2025, the NPCC and College of Policing introduced the Maturity Matrix – the tool by which forces' progress against the PRAP will be measured, assessed, and accounted for. The Maturity Matrix guidance document leads forces to complete and publish their annual assessments within a national template for external reporting. It is expected that the national team will coordinate completion of this action in Autumn 2026.

While we continue to deliver our locally set actions, we are currently migrating our action tracking into the Maturity Matrix. As such, this progress update will be the final in the current format. The publication of our annual assessment will succeed the publication of these biannual progress updates, to ensure openness and transparency, and to enable comparison with national standards and other forces.

This progress update should be read as a Situation Report. It outlines activities to progress towards delivering our local actions to improve policing services for Black and Black heritage people in South Yorkshire. Theme-by-theme, the update summarises activities which have been completed in the previous six months or remain ongoing at this time.

Reflection from Deputy Chief Constable Sarah Poolman

Our South Yorkshire Police Race Action Plan was developed to improve policing services for Black and Black heritage people in Sheffield, Doncaster, Rotherham, and Barnsley. A year and a half into delivery, we have made significant progress against our local actions and have laid strong foundations for real and lasting change.

Highlights of the previous six months include:

- Reaching an eight year high in relation to the number of officers and staff joining the force from ethnic minority backgrounds
- Delivering inclusion training to 61% of our colleagues, with all set to have received it by the end of August 2026.
- Launching our internal and cross-force mentoring sessions and networks to support retention and career progression
- Advancing our recording and analysis of data to address the root cause of disproportionality in our use of powers

However, while quantitative and qualitative measures, monitored and reported upon by the internal governance structure, are indicative of the beginnings of change, we have been humbly and valuably reminded by Black colleagues and communities that the one true measure of success is how they feel about policing services in the here and now.

Sentiment is dynamic and, following years of generational trauma, every step that takes us one step forward can be reversed tenfold by one wrong or failure of society or authority - whether here or elsewhere. Perceptions of policing only change when we can evidence sustained impact of activities, and this will take far longer than the infancy of the PRAP.

This is not a task to be finished. It is an ever-lasting commitment to improvement and evolution.

Upon reading this progress update, I hope that you are reassured by the foundations we are laying to improve policing services for the generations of today and those of the decades to come. You have my commitment that, under my leadership, we will continuously work towards greater equality and inclusion in collaboration with all who have a role to play.

South Yorkshire

Population

2024

1,430,623

people

58,620,101 people in England

Source: ONS - Mid-year estimates

Small area: Output area

Ethnic group

2021

South Yorkshire (England)



Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh
5.8% (9.6%)

Black, Black British, Black Welsh,
Caribbean or African **2.5%** (4.2%)

Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups
2.2% (3.0%)

White **87.7%** (81.0%)

Other ethnic group **1.8%** (2.2%)

% of all people

Source: ONS - Census 2021

Small area: Output area

Source: Office for National Statistics

South Yorkshire Police delivers policing services to a jurisdiction with a population of just over 1.43 million people. Data from the 2021 Census shows that, while 87.7% of residents identify as White (England – 81%), South Yorkshire is increasingly diverse. Around 5.8% of the population identify as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh (England - 9.6%), 2.5% as Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African (England - 4.2%), and 2.2% as Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups (England – 3%). A further 1.8% identify with other ethnic groups (England – 2.2%).

This data is representative of a diverse and evolving community across the county, underlining the importance of inclusive public services and engagement that reflects the people who live and work here.

Theme 1: Build an anti-racist, inclusive, and informed workforce

We committed to implementing new additional training inputs on racism, anti-racism, trauma associated with disproportionality, and Black history and its connection to policing.

Our inclusion training (Inclusion Matters) launched in September 2025 and incorporates Black history, cultural competence, and bias. As of April 2026, the input has been delivered to approximately 61% of the workforce, with completion scheduled for August 2026. In January 2026, Inclusion Matters was added to the formal induction for all those who join the organisation. It is also on the timetable for those who join as part of large cohorts e.g. police officers, PCSOs, and Force Control Room staff. We are in the process of developing ongoing nudge activities to ensure positive culture is embedded beyond initial training.

Upstander training has also been refreshed, and we will soon commence force-wide delivery. The half-day input will be delivered in person. The aim is to ensure delegates understand the role of an upstander; recognise the appropriateness of behaviours; develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enable effective intervention; and set the context of upstanding against policing's Code of Ethics and Ethical Policing Principles. The input gives an insight into what sometimes deters intervention and how to overcome those barriers and uses pre-prepared scenarios to reflect on situations.

We have an action plan in place to respond to the findings of the Our Black Workforce Survey – the actions aim to increase/ improve whistleblowing and reporting confidence, build allyship, and ensure consistent completion of Equality Impact Assessments (EIA). Our existing EIAs are being reviewed and updated to ensure our policies do not disadvantage people based on any protected characteristics.

Theme 2: Increase representation

We committed to completing a review of previous work delivered around increasing representation to look at where improvements will be made through the delivery of a new Positive Action Strategy.

Officers and staff from under-represented groups have access to networks and mentoring which are subject to continuous development – including cross-force and cross emergency services coaching and mentoring, and development sessions facilitated by the Deputy Chief Constable. The aim of these initiatives is to provide an inclusive environment, where diversity is understood and valued, where barriers to development and progression can be discussed and overcome, and constructive support can be provided.

A dedicated Positive Action Sergeant was appointed in February 2025 and focuses on delivering strategic plans in relation to community engagement, attraction/ recruitment, and retention/ progression. Since the Positive Action Sergeant's appointment, there has been an increase in both managers and staff reaching out for support.

With regards to community engagement, the Positive Action Sergeant is building a network of community ambassadors who advise and receive information in relation to recruitment. The ambassadors are helping us to break down barriers to joining the police and explain the process and benefits of being part of our policing family, as a police officer, member of police staff, or volunteer in our huge array of districts and departments.

With regards to progression, the Positive Action Sergeant is currently supporting eight police officers and two members of police staff while delivering actions to increase awareness of progression opportunities via communications and the creation of clearer career development pathways through the organisation.

All of this activity and more is captured in our Positive Action Strategy, with workforce representation data evidencing success. In 2025/2026 Q4, we reached an eight year high in relation to the number of officers and staff joining the force from ethnic minority backgrounds.

We committed to reviewing the recruitment process to understand the barriers limiting representation, whilst maintaining the high standards expected of us.

A review of the recruitment process has been conducted and, alongside insights from communities in relation to the barriers limiting representation, this has informed Positive Action attraction and recruitment activities.

Positive Action attraction activities undertaken this year include:

- Advertising via universities and colleges, the military, the PRAP Independent Advisory Group (IAG), local Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT), and local places of worship
- Attending community engagement events at youth clubs, cadet events, cultural events, and places of worship to diversify outreach, understand the barriers limiting representation and address these with the support of key community leaders. During events, QR codes are handed out to help identify those who apply as a result of engagement events
- Delivering engagement activities aligned with recruitment campaigns and improving the use of social media in relation to recruitment
- Engaging with cadets, specials, and volunteers, encouraging them to consider a career in policing

Positive Action recruitment activities undertaken this year include:

- Providing Positive Action support on a group and one-to-one basis to support those applying to join the police
- Attending recruitment events and having open and honest conversations with potential applicants about the roles and responsibilities in policing. We have recently welcomed two candidates from past events to the police family. We have now begun handing QR codes out to help identify those who apply as a result of engagement events. Of note, 170 individuals have expressed an interest in joining South Yorkshire Police (SYP) using the QR code and the Positive Action Sergeant continues to engage with those from under-represented groups.
- Ethnic minority candidates who fail at different stages of the recruitment process are contacted by the Positive Action Sergeant and kept in a talent pool to make them aware of future roles which they could apply for, and the support available to them to help them to be successful in future.

Work is ongoing to refine reporting from our recruitment system to enhance our understanding of success rates of each stage of the recruitment process. There are also plans to introduce improved positive action metrics linked to the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and PRAP workstreams.

We committed to utilising survey and exit interview findings to identify and resolve problems before Black and Black heritage officers feel they need to leave the organisation.

The aforementioned networks - namely the Race, Inclusion and Equity Network and Black Heritage Action and Advisory Group, mentoring opportunities, and peer support group are valuable initiatives in identifying and resolving problems before Black and Black heritage officers feel they need to leave the organisation.

In January 2026, a new leavers' process was introduced. This is enabling the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from leavers in relation to demographics and common themes within their reasons for leaving. Analysis of this data is being used to inform future action planning.

In February 2026, 'Say to Stay' was launched. This initiative provides a safe space for colleagues to confidentially report concerns which may be informing their decision to consider leaving the organisation to the People team. All those who engage via 'Say to Stay' are offered the full spectrum of support, including that of the Positive Action Sergeant. So far, 19 colleagues have contacted the initiative, and work is ongoing to expand data recording to success to be measured.

We committed to ensuring there are consequences following reports of racist behaviour and a set of approaches are available for staff on how to respond to and manage incidents with understanding and compassion shown to all victims.

The force has well established grievance and misconduct processes, supported by the Professional Standards Department (PSD), to ensure that reports of racist behaviour are appropriately progressed and addressed.

The victim-centred approach has been informed by consultation and engagement with relevant groups. Victims are assigned a Welfare Officer who has regular contact with them throughout the process and can signpost them to additional support.

Work is ongoing to strengthen the workforce's confidence in reporting mechanisms, increase awareness of outcomes, and ensure consistent application of processes across the organisation.

PSD commissions the services of an Independent Ethics Panel (IEP) member to independently review vetting refusals and there are plans to expand this to encompass complaints and misconduct.

Theme 3: Proportionate use of police powers

We committed to ensuring officer training on use of powers increases recording, enabling the force to scrutinise use of powers to eliminate any disproportionality.

Since 2020/ 2021, recording of use of force in South Yorkshire has increased by 366%. We know this is not indicative of an increase in use of force, because officers have historically disclosed occurrences at custody. Rather, this is an increase in compliance with the formalised reporting process.

In our most recent HMICFRS inspection (2024/2025), inspectors found that 92.4% of Stop Searches had reasonable grounds recorded. This is a statistically significant increase on the 2020/2021 figure of 76%.

To ensure transparency and accountability, the force holds regular internal and community scrutiny panels. During these meetings, panel members are given an overview of use of force and stop searches in the relevant period, before being given the opportunity to review occurrences using the records and officers' body worn video footage. Feedback from both the internal and community scrutiny panels is cascaded to the relevant officers and organisational learning themes are identified for incorporation into training and CPD.

We committed to developing an appropriate technical solution to enable officers to efficiently record vehicle stops and their rationale and specifically the person's self-defined ethnicity.

The vehicle stop recording app went live in April 2025, and ongoing analysis seeks to identify any disproportionality in relation to the use of vehicle stop powers to ensure it is addressed appropriately, and to ensure that the app is being consistently used by officers across the force.

It is our intention to subject this data to internal and community scrutiny – supported by the viewing of associated body worn video footage, as we do with stop search and use of force.

In November 2026, the force will implement a new records management system and a key workstream of this project is improving data recording and accuracy of which self-defined ethnicity is a key component.

Theme 4: Improve relationships and confidence within communities

We committed to creating an engagement strategy and accessible list of contacts to improve our positive engagement and collaborative working with Black communities.

Our Engagement Strategy (2024-2027) centres around the core pillar of engaging with visibility and purpose. Other pillars include information and reassurance, monitoring and accountability, active listening and consultation, partnership and cooperation, and empowerment and under-represented groups. Each of these strands are built on foundations setting out what the objective means to SYP, where we are now, where we want to be, how we will get there, how we will measure and monitor success, when the objective will be achieved, and what the known challenges are to delivery.

Within the under-represented groups strand of the strategy, there is a specific action to ensure districts and priority areas, including PRAP, have an Independent Advisory Group. We have an established PRAP IAG which meets quarterly, acting as a critical friend and supporting our work to engage and collaborate with Black communities.

Further to the PRAP IAG, our Neighbourhood Policing Teams and the Positive Action Sergeant has identified specific points of contact for diverse communities within our Neighbourhood Policing Team areas. In line with our Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee commitment to improve visibility and accessibility, the Positive Action Sergeant also works with Neighbourhood Policing Teams to ensure force attendance at community events.

The Positive Action Sergeant tracks engagement via dedicated Microsoft Form. Further work is required to fully embed the use of this form within NPTs so that we can identify and fill any gaps. Work is also ongoing to establish an understanding of how local Government partner agencies track their engagement with Black communities and identify any learning. We are also in the process of procuring a specialist tool which will enable more efficient and effective mapping of communities and tracking, which will help us improve positive engagement.

We committed to meeting quarterly with the Police Race Action Plan Independent Advisory Group (IAG) and regularly consulting with them on the delivery of our local plan.

Our PRAP IAG is continuing to meet on a quarterly basis. Work is ongoing to ensure attendance at meetings is reflective of wider demographics within Black and Black heritage communities across South Yorkshire and that the structure of meetings effectively and efficiently supports the delivery of the plan. In the next six months, the priority for the group will be setting our local actions against the national PRAP and assisting with the completion of our annual maturity matrix assessment by providing the community scoring of external matters, which will enable our communities to compare our position to national standards and other forces.

We committed to introducing a cohort of dedicated and trained positive action and engagement points of contact from our workforce to support our People and Organisational Development team (now HR and Learning) and Neighbourhood Policing Teams with targeted activity.

Each NPT area has been actioned to develop a plan to support this targeted activity. The plans should detail engagement priorities, target communities, and the methods of engagement. The NPT Inspectors are responsible for overseeing the delivery of the plans and updating them on a quarterly basis.

Examples of engagement include:

- Sheffield North East NPT regularly engaging with Reach Up Youth and Pitsmoor Adventure Weekly. On a weekly basis, they are visible at Verdon Street Community Centre and have plans to attend an Eritrean Independence Day event.
- Rotherham Central NPT hold regular drop ins at the Unity Centre for the Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance, and this is informing their progression of a piece of work in relation to hate crime, with the dedicated police resource.

We committed to recording and monitoring our engagement with Black communities, with each Neighbourhood Policing team being accountable for identifying and overseeing this.

While the aforementioned Microsoft Form is providing an interim solution, our new specialist tool will enable us to record and monitor our engagement with Black communities, at force-wide and local levels. A governance structure will ensure that engagement activity is being delivered and that engagement plans remain effective.

The Positive Action Sergeant is also working with Sheffield City College, the universities, and U-Mix amongst others to increase youth engagement with the police.

Theme 5: Supporting our Black colleagues

We committed to developing a dedicated peer support network for our Black colleagues to ensure they are consistently supported, and any issues are addressed.

A dedicated Peer Support Group has also been established to ensure colleagues have someone to talk to about any challenges they face or concerns they have. Members and peers are matched based on their lived experiences. The group lead holds quarterly meetings with the peers to provide a platform for escalation and ensure their wellbeing is considered as they support others. These quarterly meetings and feedback from the peers also enable organisational analysis of common themes which is used to inform our actions and next steps. Analysis is scheduled for May 2026, and this will review best practice and lessons learnt.

We committed to continuing and further developing our Black and Black heritage internal action and advisory group, which meets on a quarterly basis and provides an opportunity for consultation, influencing change, and, ultimately, driving improvements.

Our internal Black and Black Heritage Action and Advisory Group is continuing to meet on a quarterly basis. In the next six months, the priority for the group will be setting our local actions against the national PRAP and assisting with the completion of our annual assessment by providing the community scoring of internal matters.

We committed to incorporating the enhanced victim care principles into the support provided to any officer or staff member who is a victim of hate crime, alongside delivering a new policy.

Operation Hampshire (the initiative to improve how forces respond to, investigate, and support officers and staff who are assaulted and/or suffer hate crimes while on duty) has been refreshed to improve the service delivered to victims of hate crime. Our Black Heritage

Action and Advisory Group were consulted and involved in this refresh, and we have been recognised nationally for our work in this space. The refresh has resulted in increased upstanding by colleagues across the force and its' impact being monitored to inform further progression.

Theme 6: Achieve justice and protect victims from harm

We committed to launching multi-agency prevention plans, which reflect best practice, to reduce the likelihood of Black people becoming victim of violent crimes.

We take a multi-agency approach and have county-wide plans to reduce the likelihood of Black people becoming victims of violent crimes and measures of racial disproportionality are well embedded into all Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) strategic products, performance updates, and tactical plans as well as the county-wide Knife Crime Plan.

The disproportionality problem profile has been refreshed and shared with partners, the recommendations of which are now being progressed. This is valuably supported by a county-wide mapping exercise which has identified all interventions supporting this work and monitoring engagement with minority groups. These include, but are not limited to, Youth Futures Panels, Families First, and Youth Justice.

We also run education-based interventions and community programmes such as the LifeWise Centre and Knives Take Lives, which is our educational campaign developed in collaboration with students from The Sheffield College.

Racial disproportionality is prioritised within the VRU's Community Small Grants programme, with 20 knife crime and disproportionality hot spots receiving funding for additional police patrols and problem-solving activity.

A new youth voice project, with representation from the Black community essential, will inform the 2026/2027 VRU delivery plan.

We committed to carrying out analytical work to understand if Black and Black heritage people are more likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act, are more likely to be reported missing, and are less likely to have their investigation resolved by successfully identifying and prosecuting the offender.

Mental Health

The Mental Health analytical product now includes ethnicity data, linked to census data. Census data is not as detailed as required to enable significant conclusions, but it is an improvement on what was previously available. The data in relation to Section 136 (S136) detentions does not show disproportionality in the use of this power.

At the most recent scrutiny panel, S136 cases involving Black detainees were selected for review. The panel, which comprises specialists from within force and partner agencies, did not identify any concerns in relation to grounds for detention or treatment in relation to these cases.

Missing People

Quantitative analysis has been undertaken by comparing missing person investigations involving 'White – North European' and 'Black' adults and children. The analysis does not highlight any evidence of disproportionality based on ethnic appearance. The analysis has not highlighted any inappropriate or victim blaming language, based on records within incident and investigation management systems.

Investigations/ Outcomes

The force lead for Out of Court Disposals (OOCDis) has completed a gender and ethnicity analysis of disproportionality. While the data is complex and efforts to interpret this remain ongoing, at this stage there is no indication of ethnic disproportionality in relation to the use of OOCDis.

As part of the independent scrutiny of Out of Court Resolutions (OOCR), there is an annual assessment of disproportionality in the use of OOCRs by South Yorkshire Police – the most recent in January 2026. The independent panels have not found evidence of disproportionality.

Work is also ongoing to understand if there is any disproportionality in relation to the identification and arrest of suspects, charge, and caution rate for crimes with Black or Black heritage victims. Where disproportionality is identified, action will be taken to address this.





Next Steps

- Completing and publishing our annual assessment by the end of September, which involves populating the entirety of the Maturity Matrix and engaging with Black communities both in and outside policing to enable each standard to be scored by those with lived experience
- Ensuring our internal and external Black advisory groups are reflective of wider demographics within Black and Black heritage communities in Barnsley, Doncaster, Sheffield, and Rotherham, and all services who have the capability to support the improvement of services
- Improving and recording engagement to ensure that we can measure public perceptions of policing, trust, and confidence within Black and Black heritage communities across South Yorkshire and reality test our progress against lived experiences of our services
- Enhancing our understanding of which data sets are most highly valued by Black communities when measuring the impact of activities and improving recording and analysis of these metrics to develop a self-service product used to address disparities and enable transparency.

Appendices

1. List of Abbreviations

- **PRAP** - Police Race Action Plan
- **SYP** - South Yorkshire Police
- **PC/ PCs** - Police Constable(s)
- **PCSO/ PCSOs** - Police Community Support Officer(s)
- **NPT** - Neighbourhood Policing Team
- **PA** - Positive Action
- **PSD** - Professional Standards Department
- **EDI** - Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
- **EIA** - Equality Impact Assessment
- **IAG** - Independent Advisory Group
- **IEP** - Independent Ethics Panel
- **PCEP** - Police Constable Entry Programme
- **OOCD** - Out of Court Disposal
- **OOCR** - Out of Court Resolution
- **VRU** - Violence Reduction Unit
- **SYMCA** - South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority
- **S136 / Section 136** - Section 136 of the Mental Health Act

2. Key Terms Defined

- **Positive Action/ Positive Action Sergeant**
Positive action refers to lawful steps taken to encourage and support people from under-represented groups to apply for and progress within policing.
- **Upstander**
A colleague who has the knowledge, skills, and confidence to intervene and challenge inappropriate behaviour, reporting concerns.
- **Victim-centred approach**
An approach which prioritises the needs of the victim.
- **Independent scrutiny panels**
Independent scrutiny panels are made up of community representatives, not paid police officers and staff.
- **Disproportionality problem profile**
A file which analyses an issue to help understand and address the root causes.



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