



South Yorkshire

POLICE

South Yorkshire Police **Race Action Plan**

**Progress Update:
September 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 as the tool by which forces' progress against the PRAP would be measured, assessed, and accounted for. The associated guidance indicated forces would be required to complete and publish their annual assessments within a national template for external reporting by Autumn 2026. However, the publication scheme remains under review.

While we continue to deliver our locally set actions, we have migrated our action tracking into the Maturity Matrix. We were expecting our April 2026 progress update to be the final in the original format. However, as the national publication scheme remains under review, our October 2026 update follows the original format to ensure continued openness and transparency with Black colleagues and communities.

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 we have focussed upon in the previous six months or remain ongoing at this time.

Reflection from Deputy Chief Constable Sarah Poolman

Since our South Yorkshire Police Race Action Plan was launched in October 2024, our six-monthly progress updates have consistently reported upon actions we have taken to improve policing services for Black and Black heritage people across South Yorkshire. We have published and shared these updates with a balance of both pride and humility in how far we have come and still must go.

However, this year, particularly the summer, has seen some of our best moments yet. We have engaged with more Black and Black heritage people and groups than ever before and we have developed an understanding of how Black colleagues and communities feel about our progress and policing in the here and now – the one true measure of success.

In late June and early July, some of those who support the delivery of the Police Race Action Plan within South Yorkshire Police met with Black and Black heritage colleagues, 16-18-year-olds, and community members/representatives – asking them to assess our progress against the 14 standards of the national Maturity Matrix using the associated scoring criteria.

These events were open to all and advertised via community groups and events. I would like to use this opportunity to thank all those who joined the events.

We were encouraged by the average feeling of those who attended being that we are going even further to deliver change.

We were also valuably reminded that, despite extensive work, we must do more to ensure our colleagues and communities feel the impact of our activities, particularly in relation to increasing representation and supporting our colleagues, and have faith that these are the foundations of meaningful and long-lasting change.

Upon reading this progress update, I hope that you are reassured by the inclusion of the average findings of the community assessments highlighted in bold within the updates on associated themes, and some qualitative feedback, on page six, from some of those who attended our engagement sessions.

In the coming year, we plan to engage with even more Black and Black heritage people and I encourage readers of this report to get involved.

Our Police Race Action Plan is our commitment to continuous improvement and evolution.

If you have any questions or would like to get involved, please e-mail:
PRAP@southyorkshire.police.uk

Maturity Matrix Standard 14:

Our Black colleagues and 16-18-year-olds feel we are doing even more to make things better.

Force score: 3

Colleague score: 4

Community score: 2

16-18 score: 4

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

Feedback from communities

“I believe that we are in the right direction to achieving our objectives in bringing back trust and confidence in Police within our communities”

“I am aware it’s different from say 10 years ago and change takes time”

“Overall, more is being done in ensuring that SYP achieves its objectives on police race action plan”

“SYP are on a journey towards integration and equity regarding black people”

“It’s nice seeing some really positive change in areas that we previously haven’t been great in. Having people sit in on training and inviting people in to give real information and opinions on our processes, I think it will really help.”

“It is great to know there is a team so passionate about this work”

“There is a lot of good work being done here”

“I was very happy to hear about the good work that South Yorkshire Police are doing”

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

National and locally, policing seeks feedback from Black colleagues through anonymous surveys, with the most recent conducted in February 2026. These help us understand their experiences, identify areas for improvement, inform our next steps, and help us track our progress over time.

Under our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy and local Police Race Action Plan, we have introduced mandatory inclusion training, based on lived experiences and national best practice, which covers:

- Black history and its relevance today
- Cultural awareness and cultural competence
- Understanding and challenging bias
- Inclusion and respectful workplace behaviours
- Positive interactions with the public
- Allyship and advocacy

As of the end of September 2026, 200 training sessions had been delivered to more than 4491 attendees, with approximately 90% of the workforce trained.

We have also redesigned and relaunched our Upstander programme to help colleagues recognise unacceptable behaviour, support colleagues, and speak up when something is not right.

The contents of our corporate induction programmes, Professional Standards inputs, and Code of Ethics training all reinforce the expected standards of behaviour.

A programme of work is now underway to review all organisational policies and the associated Equality Impact Assessments. This process will help to identify and overcome any unintended barriers or inequalities within.

Building an anti-racist, inclusive, and informed workforce is not just about supporting our colleagues. It is about developing our cultural awareness so we can deliver compassionate, respectful, and empathetic policing services to all communities.

This work is ongoing, and while there is more to do now and, in the future, we are committed to creating a culture where discrimination is challenged, differences are valued, and everyone has a sense of belonging.

Maturity Matrix Standard 3:

Our Black colleagues feel we are doing well at having an internal culture which treats everyone fairly and challenges racism.

Force score: 3

Colleague score: 3

Community score: 2

16-18 score: 3

Theme 2: Increase representation

We have made progress in improving workforce representation. However, we know there is more work to do.

People from ethnically diverse backgrounds make up around 9.4% of South Yorkshire's population and 5.3% of our workforce. Black people make up around 2.7% of the local population but 1.29% of the workforce. We recognise this under-representation and are actively aiming to improve it through the work of our dedicated Positive Action Sergeant.

Sergeant Gourdin engages with key groups and organisations to promote careers in policing, answer questions, and explain the application process. The force is also developing online workshops to help prospective applicants understand expectations, recruitment processes, and the support available to those who join the organisation.

A new system has been introduced this year which is developing our understanding of candidates' experiences during recruitment – where applicants succeed, where they face barriers, and what changes may help improve accessibility and inclusivity. It's not about lowering standards, but to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity.

The force also works with independent groups to review areas such as vetting to ensure decisions are evidence-based and fair.

We have also introduced several initiatives to support retention, including: dedicated peer support networks, coaching and mentoring, Positive Action support for colleagues from under-represented groups, "Say to Stay" which helps identify and address concerns before people leave the organisation, and a new exit interview process designed to improve understanding of why people leave and what can be improved. The force has already seen a reduction in the number of ethnically diverse police officers leaving compared with previous years, although further work is needed to understand and improve long-term retention.

We regularly review workforce data, including recruitment and retention information, to identify where improvements are needed.

Representation is about more than numbers. It is about ensuring the organisation is well placed to understand and respond to the needs of different communities.

Maturity Matrix Standard 1:

Our Black colleagues and communities feel we are getting better at having a fair recruitment process and people from all backgrounds.

Force score: 4

Colleague score: 2

Community score: 2

16-18 score: 3

Theme 3: Proportionate use of police powers

Since the launch of our local plan, we have been aiming to continuously improve the recording and analysis of data, including self-defined ethnicity, in relation to the use of powers such as stop and search, vehicle stops, and use of force.

In support of this, our training team undertook a comprehensive review of inputs to ensure that, throughout their careers, our colleagues are regularly reminded of our expectations in relation to equality, diversity, and inclusion; cultural awareness; de-escalation; and procedural justice – consistently reinforcing that police powers must only be used when necessary, justified, and proportionate.

Maturity Matrix Standard 6:

Our Black colleagues feel we are doing well at working to make sure use of powers do not unfairly affect or harm Black people, and 16-18-year-olds feel we are doing even more.

Force score: 2

Colleague score: 3

Community score: 2

16-18 score: 4

We listened to our colleagues, who raised issues with systems, and took action to overcome some of the challenges they faced. This has made a real difference - particularly in relation to vehicle stops, and we are expecting to see further improvements to in data recording, accuracy, and quality following the implementation of a new records management system in November 2026.

In addition to improving data recording and analysis, we have conducted research to develop our understanding of the context surrounding the use of police powers – such as correlation in neighbourhoods with higher levels of deprivation and crime. As per the recommendation of His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, our initial findings are published on our website and academics are supporting this work.

We invite regular scrutiny of use of powers via established internal and external groups. Panel members dip sample occurrences and review body worn video footage and supervisory reviews – providing feedback and highlighting concerns. Data-led scrutiny of the outcomes e.g. arrest and enforcement action which follow the use of a power has not identified any disproportionality towards ethnically diverse communities.

Maturity Matrix Standard 5:

Our Black communities feel we are getting better at using powers fairly, and only when needed, to get the right results, and colleagues feel we are doing it well.

Force score: 3

Colleague score: 3

Community score: 2

16-18 score: 1

Maturity Matrix Standard 13:

Our Black communities feel we are getting better at taking responsibility for actions, and 16-18-year-olds feel we are doing even more.

Force score: 3

Colleague score: 3

Community score: 2

16-18 score: 4

Theme 4: Improve relationships and confidence within communities

Under our Engagement Strategy and Police Race Action Plan, we are focussing on improving how we listen to all communities and use their feedback to inform actions – making this a core component of our approach to neighbourhood policing. Each of our Neighbourhood Policing Teams have mapped their communities and have been asked to develop bespoke engagement plans and identify community ambassadors who can support them in engaging with individuals and groups effectively and efficiently on a one-to-one basis and at community events, supported by our Positive Action Sergeant.

Our Senior Leaders often accept invitations to speak at key locations on dates of significance e.g. Windrush Day and Black History Month. While these are a valuable opportunity to address communities directly, they are an invaluable opportunity to experience Black culture and understand the significance of Black history on current and future generations. Leaders also meet with community representatives through our Police Race Action Plan Independent Advisory Group (IAG), which helps us test ideas, challenge approaches, and ensure perceptions and experiences inform decisions.

Maturity Matrix Standard 7:

Our Black communities feel we are getting better at understanding that Black communities have been hurt in the past and are working to rebuild trust, and 16-18-year-olds feel we are doing even more.

Force score: 2

Colleague score: 3

Community score: 2

16-18 score: 4

The PRAP Independent Advisory Group also plays a key role in checking our work and holding us to account. Leaders meet with the members on a quarterly basis to provide key updates on the delivery of our Police Race Action Plan and answer any questions they have in relation to operational and organisational activities. This has directly influenced improvements. We also have other groups who meet to dip sample operational use of police powers. In the last six months, our engagement has extended beyond these familiar groups into the wider community and younger generation. We are now working to ensure our groups are representative of all demographics within our Black communities.

Maturity Matrix Standard 8:

Our Black colleagues and 16-18-year-olds feel we are doing well at being honest and give people the opportunity to check the force's work.

Force score: 3

Colleague score: 3

Community score: 2

16-18 score: 3

The most effective relationships are established and maintained face-to-face basis but, as a force, we acknowledge the significance of digital communications in the present and future. We are investing in new ways to engage with communities and young people. Based on feedback, such as that from students at Meadowhead College, we will soon be launching a force TikTok channel and refreshing our digital communications to ensure they are in line with audience and channel expectations. We continue to explore the procurement of other digital channels which will support Neighbourhood Policing Teams in engaging with all communities across South Yorkshire.

Maturity Matrix Standard 9:

Our Black communities feel we are getting better at listening to Black communities/ people and taking action based on their concerns.

Force score: 3

Colleague score: 3

Community score: 2

16-18 score: 2

Maturity Matrix Standard 10:

Our Black communities feel we are getting better at working closely with Black communities.

Force score: 3

Colleague score: 3

Community score: 2

16-18 score: 2

Theme 5: Support Black colleagues

We have an established group to bring colleagues from Black heritage backgrounds, providing a safe space to: share experiences, discuss challenges and opportunities, build networks, support each other's development, and help shape organisational improvements.

We know that representation decreases at more senior police officer ranks. To help address this, we have strengthened support and opportunities for colleagues from under-represented groups. So far, conversations have been held with 25 colleagues to better understand their aspirations and provide support based on individual needs.

In our Deputy Chief Constable-led and cross force sessions, Black and ethnically diverse colleagues are being actively encouraged to learn from experienced colleagues, build confidence, develop leadership skills, prepare for promotion processes, and explore specialist career pathways.

Our Positive Action Sergeant is also helping to ensure colleagues from under-represented groups are aware of opportunities for promotion and specialist roles and feel supported to pursue them. This work has already helped colleagues pursue opportunities in areas including firearms and leadership.

We are also working with other police forces to learn from successful programmes designed to support the progression of under-represented groups elsewhere. By learning from national best practice, we can continue strengthening the support available locally.

As well as formal development opportunities, the force is improving peer support through a refreshed buddy scheme. The aim is to help new and existing colleagues build connections, receive guidance and feel part of an inclusive workplace from an early stage in their career. Work is underway to make this more consistent and accessible.

There is more work to do, particularly in understanding and breaking down barriers to progression into senior leadership roles. However, the initiatives which have been established under this theme of work, we are working towards creating a workplace where everyone has the opportunity to develop, progress, and thrive.

Maturity Matrix Standard 2:

Our Black colleagues feel we are getting better at supporting Black colleagues to develop and achieve promotion.

Force score: 4

Colleague score: 2

Community score: 2

16-18 score: 3

Theme 6: Achieve justice and protect victims from harm

Through the introduction of improved training, systems, and enhanced oversight, we have improved the consistency and fairness of the use of Out of Court Resolutions. Analysis of the previous five years' data has found no significant disproportionality affecting ethnically diverse communities. Through established governance structures, outcomes are continuously monitored and, through our scrutiny arrangements, independent panel members provide assurance that decisions are lawful and fair.

In collaboration with the Violence Reduction Unit, we have enhanced our understanding of the crime types which disproportionately affect Black people. This work has highlighted the impact of knife crime, gun crime, and other incidents of serious youth violence on the younger generation. Through targeted interventions and programmes such as Families First, the Turnaround Project, and Knives Take Lives, we are aiming to prevent harm, prevent crime, and provide support at the earliest opportunity.

Maturity Matrix Standard 11:

Young Black people believe we are doing well at helping to protect Black people and support them to stay safe and make positive choices.

Force score: 1

Colleague score: 2

Community score: 2

16-18 score: 3

Alongside this, ourselves and local partners have improved safeguarding arrangements to better protect vulnerable people. Our officers have received training on adultification, we have introduced increased scrutiny for stop searches involving children and people from ethnically diverse backgrounds, we have a robust governance process for strip searches – including 100 per cent quality assurance reviews for those involving children and women. In custody, dedicated health professionals and diversion services ensure vulnerable individuals receive the right care. Reviews of police-led mental health detentions have not identified any disproportionality towards Black people.

Maturity Matrix Standard 4:

Our Black communities feel we are getting better at keeping Black people safe during investigations, and colleagues feel we are doing it well.

Force score: 3

Colleague score: 3

Community score: 2

16-18 score: 1

Maturity Matrix Standard 12:

Our Black colleagues and communities feel we are getting better at responding to the needs of Black people.

Force score: 2

Colleague score: 2

Community score: 2

16-18 score: 2





Priorities for the next six months

- Engaging with the national team to ensure our local action plan is also reflective of national priorities, and our progress can be benchmarked against others
- Making enhanced engagement with all demographics, including young people, business as usual to ensure our future plans are informed by groups who more regularly have police contact
- Working to ensure key performance indicators are regularly monitored and reported upon in governance and scrutiny arrangements
- Reviewing entry routes and engaging with jobseekers and candidates from underrepresented groups to help overcome barriers to joining
- In collaboration with Sheffield Hallam University, furthering our understanding of the context around disproportionality in the use of police powers and ensuring equity
- Embedding our new vehicle stops dashboard and ensuring key data sets from the dashboard are monitored and reported upon in governance arrangements, to ultimately improve recording across the force
- Improving the recording and supervisory reviews of use of force
- In collaboration with the Violence Reduction Unit and other key partner agencies, reducing serious youth violence – particularly knife crime in identified hot spots
- Preparing for our inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, demonstrating our progress and acting upon any identified areas for improvement
- Developing our South Yorkshire Police Race Action plan for future years

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
- **O OCD** - Out of Court Disposal
- **O OCR** - 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.

3. Scoring Criteria

- 1 Just starting
- 2 Getting better
- 3 Doing well
- 4 Doing even more
- 5 Leading the way



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