

Trauma tracker to identify and monitor trauma exposure

A trauma tracker has been created to identify and monitor traumatic exposure by utilising academic research and automated system processes to ensure that appropriate care is provided.

First published

1 September 2025

Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Leadership, development and learning Wellbeing
Organisation	West Yorkshire Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2023–25 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of West Yorkshire Police
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Region	North East
Partners	Police Education

Key details

Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	October 2023
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Workforce

Aim

West Yorkshire Police's (WYP) initiative has taken an existing framework and used it to create a broad dataset to assist in understanding the nature, scale, and scope of exposure, which can be displayed to show the different challenges and workplace experiences of officers and staff.

The initiative encourages early intervention, by tracking wellbeing support provided and overlaying changes to psychological absence and attrition rates. This allows the force to identify the most successful early interventions based on experiences force wide.

The main aim of this initiative is to apply the principles of the [Police Traumatic Events Checklist \(PTEC\)](#), developed by Police Care UK, and to identify and understand the nature of traumatic exposure in policing in West Yorkshire and beyond by:

- establishing a framework for identifying exposure
- capturing and visualising force-wide data
- exploring the impact of protected characteristics
- supporting national learning across forces.
- monitoring and reviewing wellbeing outcomes

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the trauma tracker are to:

- reduce psychological absence

- improve attrition rates particularly for frontline officers and staff
- improve views around wellbeing provision in staff wellbeing surveys

Description

The PTEC provides insight into the most traumatic incident types, based on national research and surveys with police officers and staff. It also offers a structured framework for debriefing, helping to understand situational factors that may intensify the impact of traumatic exposure. For example, personal resonance or a gruesome scene may make an incident more impactful than a similar event without those factors.

The trauma tracker utilises the PTEC framework through a three-tiered system:

Self-referral portal:

- enables staff to assess themselves following traumatic exposure
- supports self-awareness around changes in general wellbeing

Team based traumatic exposure tracker:

- provides team-level packs highlighting traumatic exposure
- informs supervision and facilitates structured debriefs
- feeds into the force-wide platform, displaying exposure data, its impact, treatment provided, and the success of early interventions

Force trauma tracker:

- designed for senior leadership, wellbeing teams, and continuous improvement teams
- summarises traumatic exposure and support actions based on PTEC guidance
- offers filters by department, team, individual, protected characteristics, geography, length of service, skill set, psychological absence, and attrition rates

Development and implementation

Based on this approach and using analytical support, WYP built a prototype tracker using the available force systems and the academic framework of the PTEC as a guide. The prototype identified incident types aligned with PTEC, tracks attendance, and quantifies exposure. A resulting

document was then circulated in line with standard operating procedures to guide supervisors on which incidents require debriefs and how to conduct them.

Debrief results are captured through a return form detailing situational factors and support provided. Situational factors are circumstances that impact the extent of the traumatic exposure, such as personal resonance or the nature of the scene. A holistic view is then available, showing the highest areas of traumatic exposure across districts, departments, teams, and individuals, along with reasons for impact and wellbeing support offered.

Team managers access their data through the team-based platform, while senior leaders and strategic leads can view broader force-wide insights for comparison and learning.

Training and support

As part of the Science, Technology, Analysis, and Research (STAR) funding delivery plan:

- online training is being developed for staff, with a focus on supervisors
- bespoke in-person training is delivered through training sessions delivered by sergeants
- discussions are underway to expand training for senior leaders and new joiners to WYP

Collaboration and communication

This initiative works closely with staff networks including the Federation, GMB Union, Unison, British Association of Women in Policing, LGBTQ+, Disabled Police Association, Caribbean and African Police Society, and the Association of Muslim Police. These groups provide support, feedback, and updates on challenges faced by their members.

Work is ongoing with the strategic wellbeing lead in the people directorate to develop an intranet site that will host the finalised digital platforms and guidance materials. An internal communications strategy has been prepared to support the rollout.

Current status and future plans

The prototype tracker is now in use across the force, supporting supervisors and managers identify staff with high levels of traumatic exposure, and providing them with a framework for debriefing. Digital platform development is mapped out, designed and underway, potentially supported by continued STAR funding.

DEI integration and strategic alignment

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is central to the initiative. The DEI team is actively involved in tracking impact based on protected characteristics. Once the final platforms are complete, DEI teams will be able to review workplace experiences and identify underlying causes. All staff networks are engaged and briefed on the trauma tracker and are fully supportive of the work being done to understand and support the workforce.

The trauma tracker supports the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy and the Police Race Action Plan (PRAP) by informing workplace experience. Integration into these strategies is achieved through local delivery plan adjustments that recognise the role of workplace experience. Both VAWG and PRAP will use trauma tracker data to better understand staff experiences and the effectiveness of support provided.

Evaluation

An ongoing evaluation is being led by the National Police Wellbeing Service. The evaluation will measure rates of psychological sickness and whether there is any attrition. The tracker will allow the force to discern any differences in approaches across force areas which may assist in explaining differing outcomes.

Evaluation methods

- an internal focus group has been formed to discuss the ongoing development of the Trauma Trackers platform and the debrief process
- the force already tracks sickness data, therefore existing data will be used to make comparisons over time around the prevalence of sickness types and whether the advent of the trauma tracker leads to reductions in psychological absence and any other absence types
- training includes online learning and bespoke in-person training. Both methods will request feedback which will inform further reviews and evaluation of the training products

Results

According to preliminary findings, the intervention appears to be having a positive impact. In the Operational Support District, psychological absence has reduced by 7% during the first 12 months of implementation.

Staff feedback and engagement has been extremely positive. Officers and staff have reported the framework provides them with an opportunity to openly talk about their exposure and to understand the impact it may have had or have on them in the future. By implementing this framework, supervisors have a means by which to encourage early intervention.

Findings to date suggest that this framework is not inflating wellbeing intervention need beyond the scope of the force's provision, but actually that is an effective early intervention. 84% of staff have required line manager intervention, 10% have required peer support referral and 4% have required further TRiM (Trauma Risk Management) referral.

With the planned rollout of bespoke digital platforms, the force anticipates enhanced analytical capability. This will enable more effective deployment of the full range of wellbeing support and empower managers to address disparities in support received by colleagues with protected characteristics.

Overall impact

To date, 360 traumatic exposure debriefs have been conducted. This number is anticipated to rise given a recent rollout across more districts in the force.

As a result of those debriefs, 49 people have been referred to the peer support programme and 20 have been referred to TRiM provisions for specific trauma support. No staff have been referred to the Occupational Health Unit, indicating that the tracker may be effective at picking up on traumatic exposure before more serious impact occurs.

Wider rollout across the force supported by digital platforms and training provision is anticipated to accelerate the existing progress. It is too early to quantify any change in sickness trends.

Although the full objectives, and impact of the intervention are yet to be met, generally, staff have been receptive to the trauma tracker and have recognised that it is an investment in early intervention to prevent serious psychological issues from developing.

Learning

- A live-time platform is required to keep momentum. Without a live-time platform, the risk of psychological disorder rises as the time between the exposure and intervention is longer. A live-time model allows for more proactive support shortly after the incident has taken place.

- Personal interaction is necessary to capture situational factors, as these are not visible on police systems. The PTEC can operate through police systems, but not to its maximum level. Personal interaction should not be replaced by a system led process but should be supplemented by it.
- Buy-in from staff is essential as debriefs highlight the impact/potential impact of each exposure. Supervisors and managers are best placed to support their staff by establishing what early intervention needs to look like.
- Staff may be reticent to engage, particularly those in teams such as firearms who may have concern over losing permits under fitness to carry protocols. However, a continuous and honest and open approach will help to continue to see improvements in engagement.
- Force diversity data is very important in maximising the impact of the tracker. Not all forces will keep and store diversity data in a way in which it can then be visualised within trackers platform. However, the force anticipates that movements towards the better availability of data will inherently improve the understanding forces can glean from tools such as the Trauma Tracker.
- Rolling out this initiative has been complex. Forming a communication comms strategy is needed to explain the purpose of the initiative and provide clarity on what happens with people's personal information and data. This learning is critical to maximising compliance.

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