# West Yorkshire Police faces criticism over exclusion of white British candidates in recruitment policy



West Yorkshire Police (WYP), one of the largest police forces in the UK, has implemented a temporary policy that blocks applications from white British candidates for its police constable entry programme, a decision that has sparked controversy and concern over potential discrimination. This initiative is aimed at improving the diversity of the police force in an area where the most recent census indicated that 23 per cent of the population identifies as from an ethnic minority background.

Under the current recruitment guidelines, only candidates from 'under-represented' groups are permitted to submit their applications early, while applications from white British individuals are not visible in the initial stages. Former officers have raised alarms about what they describe as a "hidden" recruitment strategy that appears to give preferential treatment to certain demographic groups, essentially sidelining white British candidates.

A whistleblower with previous involvement in the recruitment process reported that early applications and preferential consideration are given to candidates classified as Black and Far East Asian, who are given a 'gold' ranking, while those from South-East Asian backgrounds receive a 'silver' ranking. Candidates identified as 'white others', such as those from Irish and eastern European backgrounds, are assigned a 'bronze' rank. The whistleblower's account adds that during a period of 15 months, vacancies for ethnic minority applicants were open for 446 days, whereas white British candidates had only 99 days to apply.

Internal documents, reportedly reviewed by senior officers, indicate that the recruitment policy is systematically skewed in favour of non-white British candidates. A striking observation from these documents stated that there is a general trend where the recruitment pipeline for white British applicants is "strangled," while those from other backgrounds are "ushered through" to the next stage of the application process.

The force has budgeted significantly for initiatives focusing on diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI), with reports indicating that it has the largest DEI personnel expenditure among UK police forces, amounting to £1 million annually. According to WYP, the restructuring is part of a broader strategy to better represent the communities they serve in terms of officer demographics.

The police force's website currently states that they are accepting applications from individuals belonging to 'under-represented groups' and encourages candidates not from these groups to check back for future opportunities. Their protocols ensure that applications from ethnic minorities are promptly processed through to interviews, but remain on hold until recruitment for all potential applicants opens.

WYP argues that this approach is compliant with the Equality Act 2010, which allows for Positive Action in recruitment to address historic disparities. They maintain that this policy allows more opportunities to attract a varied talent pool reflective of diverse communities.

However, critics argue that this methodology may verge on positive discrimination, a practice that is commonly debated in the context of employment policies. A senior employment lawyer acknowledged the legal complexities surrounding the implementation of such hiring strategies in the UK, pointing out that while mentoring through Positive Action is permissible, the preferential treatment may breach anti-discriminatory laws.

A spokesperson for WYP affirmed that the initiatives are a response to the current representation gap, with only about 9 per cent of police officers identified as coming from ethnic minority backgrounds. They highlighted that their approach had been assessed by the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, which found no issues with the implementation of their recruitment strategies.

The policies enacted by West Yorkshire Police will likely continue to elicit debate as the force seeks to navigate the balance between promoting diversity and ensuring a fair recruitment process for all candidates.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/10783/edi-plan-2025.pdf> - This document outlines West Yorkshire Combined Authority's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, which aligns with West Yorkshire Police's efforts to diversify their workforce by reflecting the local population's diversity. It emphasizes the importance of promoting diversity and inclusion in recruitment processes.
* <https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/about-us/diversity-equality-and-inclusion> - West Yorkshire Police's diversity, equality, and inclusion strategy highlights their initiative to attract a diverse workforce, fostering a culture where everyone feels valued and included, which supports their recruitment policies aimed at improving ethnic minority representation.
* <https://www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010> - This resource explains the Equality Act 2010, which allows for Positive Action in recruitment to address historic disparities, a legal basis West Yorkshire Police uses to justify their preferential recruitment strategies for under-represented groups.
* <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/> - The His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services assesses police forces' strategies, and their endorsement of West Yorkshire Police's recruitment policies indicates that these practices have been reviewed for compliance with legal standards.
* <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/news/positive-action-guidance> - This guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission provides clarity on the use of Positive Action in employment, which is central to West Yorkshire Police's strategy for increasing diversity by prioritizing under-represented groups.