

You are here [News](#) > [At a Glance](#) > [General news](#)

Police face £1 million bill after match day court loss



Millwall fans outside Elland Road as police keep an eye on events.

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WEST Yorkshire Police will be forced to hand back more than £1 million paid to them by Leeds United for policing matches at Elland Road after judges dismissed their appeal in court.

The force had hoped to overturn last year's High Court decision that policing the area around the ground on match days should not be classified as "special police services".

Its solicitors claimed policing in the "extended footprint" around Elland Road was an extra service provided exclusively for the benefit of the club and supporters and was not part of its normal duty.

The cost of the services that Leeds United paid extra for between 2009 and 2012 are thought to equate to £1 million or £350,000 a season.

Judges at the Court of Appeal yesterday dismissed the police's appeal, ruling that the original decision by High Court judge Mr Justice Eady had been correct.

Master of the Rolls Lord Dyson, sitting with Lord Justice Moore-Bick and Lord Justice McCombe, said they had not been persuaded that match day services were different to those "in any other public place".

The decision means Leeds United, whose home matches have one of the worst records of football-related violence in the country, can pursue the money already paid out as well as legal costs and interest.

West Yorkshire's Police and Crime Commissioner, Mark Burns-Williamson, warned that the decision could have an impact on community policing as officers would now have to be diverted to cover match days.

But Leeds United Chief Executive Shaun Harvey welcomed the verdict, saying other football clubs had been watching the case with interest.

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3