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Comisiynydd Heddlu a Throseddu Gwent | Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent:  
**Jeff Cuthbert B.Sc., MCIPD**



The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP  
Home Secretary  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
LONDON  
SW1P 4DF

17<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Home Secretary

### **Criminal Justice Joint Inspection – Evidence Led Domestic Abuse Prosecutions**

As required by statute, I am writing to you to respond, from a Gwent perspective, to the joint Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPIS) 'Evidence Led Domestic Abuse Prosecutions' inspection report.

Tackling Domestic Abuse effectively is an area highlighted in my Police and Crime Plan as well as in the Strategic Equality Plan that I have in place jointly with Gwent Police.

I am reassured by the Chief Constable that Gwent Police has focused on improving the service received by victims of domestic abuse for a number of years and has made great strides in how it responds to and investigates this area of crime. In its commitment to tackling domestic abuse, Gwent Police is currently working with the national charity SafeLives to provide training to 800 frontline officers and staff as part of the Domestic Abuse Matters programme. I am pleased to inform you that a network of 200 domestic abuse champions will also be created and provided with additional training in order to deliver continuous improvement in this area. It is hoped our investment in this complex area of work will provide officers with the skills and knowledge to better deal with situations as they arise and are investigated. Gwent Police also has a Domestic Abuse Champion who has engaged in the training of officers, undertakes significant scrutiny of cases and works with officers to make improvements where necessary. The use of the Domestic Abuse Champion is evaluated by SafeLives and is reviewed by Gwent Police at the monthly Vulnerability meeting, which my office attends.

Gwent Police was the first force in Wales to introduce dedicated control room staff who offer help to victims of domestic abuse outside of office hours. The Assertive Outreach Team was established in collaboration with Cyfannol Women's Aid and is available 24 hours per day. In its

*Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg, a phan ddaw i law, byddwn yn ateb yn y Gymraeg – ni fydd hyn yn gohirio ein hymateb. Os hoffech dderbyn gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg o hyn ymlaen, neu os ydych wedi cael eich gwahodd i gyfweiliad neu gyfarfod ac yr hoffech ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg, anfonwch e-bost at: [Commissioner@gwent.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Commissioner@gwent.pnn.police.uk). Darperir gwasanaethau cyfieithu.*

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and where received, we will reply in Welsh - this will not delay our response. If you wish to receive correspondence in Welsh hereafter or if you have been invited to an interview or meeting and you wish to use Welsh, send email to: [Commissioner@gwent.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Commissioner@gwent.pnn.police.uk). Translation services will be provided.

first year, the team helped 750 people with 94% of the people supported being women. This is an excellent initiative and has brought together expertise from various sectors in order to provide the victim with the best service possible. The work of this team has also attracted interest from other police forces who are keen to introduce similar schemes in their areas.

The Chief Constable has also assured me that the force continues to improve its response to domestic abuse through the review of cases. Representatives from Gwent Police meet monthly with the Crown Prosecution Service during which cases of stalking, harassment and coercive control are discussed to ensure that the correct charge has been identified; this charge is amended if an issue is found with any learning fed back both into the Force and CPS.

Following a recommendation from my office, Gwent Police has introduced a Survivor Engagement Coordinator post which is the first of its kind for a police force in Wales. It will establish a sustainable survivor engagement framework, through which survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence can share their lived experience. The role will be based within Connect Gwent, which brings together a range of support services for victims and witnesses of crime. The role will ensure that a victim centred approach is at the heart of Gwent Police's response to survivors of sexual abuse and domestic violence.

I am also pleased to inform you that Gwent Police is developing a Vulnerability Strategy that will form part of its on-going commitment to prosecute perpetrators of domestic abuse. This will be supported by the SafeLives training which will provide guidance on why victims of domestic abuse may not engage or withdraw their support and how best they can be supported to stay engaged throughout the process. Practical guidance will also be given on how and what evidence needs to be captured to try and secure an evidence-led prosecution.

The dip sampling of domestic abuse cases also provides valuable feedback to Gwent Police; this is to be expanded across the vulnerability agenda to include evidence led investigations. During a recent health check conducted by SafeLives in February 2020, it was identified that further work needed to be undertaken to change the culture of the force to commit to evidence led prosecutions. This is an area that will be focused upon during the upcoming SafeLives training and one which I will support the Chief Constable in achieving. Once this training has taken place, I am confident that it will support officers in improving the service they offer to victims of domestic abuse in all cases.

I acknowledge, as does the Chief Constable, that there is more to do despite the excellent work already being progressed by Gwent Police in this area. My office will continue to monitor and support the force to ensure that vulnerable victims are being provided with the best service possible and that investigations are undertaken effectively to ensure the best outcomes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Cuthbert', written in a cursive style.

**Jeff Cuthbert B.Sc., MCIPD**  
**Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent**