

**Swyddfa Comisiynydd yr Heddlu a Throseddau, Gwent**  
**Office of Police and Crime Commissioner, Gwent**

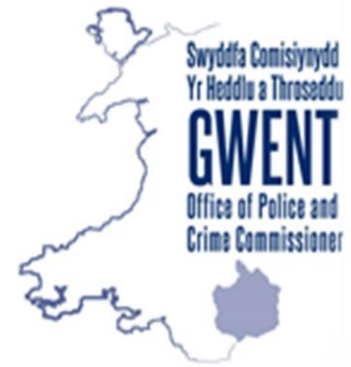
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Comisiynydd Heddlu a Throseddau Gwent | Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent:  
**Jeff Cuthbert B.Sc., MCIPD**



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

1<sup>st</sup> May 2020

Dear Home Secretary

**HMICFRS Inspection – Both Sides of the Coin: The Police and National Crime Agency’s Response to Vulnerable People in ‘County Lines’**

As required by statute, I am writing to you to respond, from a Gwent perspective, to the findings contained within the HMICFRS inspection report into the national policing response to county lines.

I welcome this national report from HMICFRS and am pleased to note that the intelligence picture for county lines is improving. If we are to tackle county lines effectively, it is vital that we have a collective understanding of the issue at both a regional and national level.

In Gwent, I am confident that we have suitable arrangements in place to respond to the challenges of county lines from an informed position. Our efforts to tackle serious organised crime in Newport, supported by funding from the Home Office, and close work with the Tarian Regional Organised Crime Unit have provided a robust foundation for intelligence-driven disruptive activity. I am pleased at the results we have achieved in Gwent and credit our intelligence capabilities for contributing to this success.

Our intelligence indicates that county lines is less prominent in Gwent compared to other force areas. However, local concerns regarding serious organised crime have raised similar issues to county lines, such as child criminal exploitation and serious violence. To that end, Gwent Police have prioritised and responded to these issues with the level of severity that they require.

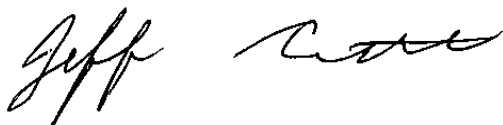
I note that the report recognises the effectiveness of ‘intensification weeks’ in disrupting county lines activity. This success has been replicated in Gwent, where multi-agency coordinated enforcement action has seen multiple drug supply lines shut down. Gwent Police remain

committed to this approach and I welcome the fact that this report encourages it as good practice at a national level.

As stated in the report, children can be at risk of exploitation both in and out of school. In my Police and Crime Plan, I identify both child criminal and sexual exploitation as key issues to be tackled. Delivering against this commitment, my office has led a multi-agency research project that examined the link between trauma, exclusion, exploitation and criminality for a cohort of vulnerable children in Newport. The findings of this project have provided an effective platform to understand how experiences of vulnerability can increase exposure to crime and exploitation along with what support is needed to help those children identified as being at risk.

It is my view that this research project has demonstrated the value of joint working between agencies. Without the collective efforts of partners, the project would not have been possible. In Gwent, we have many effective partnership arrangements in place to meet the demands of serious organised crime and to protect vulnerable individuals. These partnerships have been invaluable in improving our safeguarding response. However, as stated in the report, I recognise that our approach to joint working can improve further. As Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent, I will continue to monitor Gwent Police's partnership arrangements and ensure that opportunities for improvement in this area are sought continuously.

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**