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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

30th September 2021

Dear Home Secretary

HMICFRS Inspection – Spotlight Report, A Review of Fraud: Time to Choose

As required by statute, I am writing to you to respond to the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection report entitled, 'Spotlight Report, A Review of Fraud: Time to Choose'.

I welcome the revisit of the Fraud: Time to Choose inspection that was originally published in 2019 but was disappointed to learn that there is still a lack of capacity and capability in tackling this area of crime considering, as your report states, that it is estimated to have the highest number of incidents committed in England and Wales. Fraud forms part of my wider focus on cybercrime within my new Police and Crime Plan which has just been through its consultation phase. In building the new framework to support the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan, my office is working with Gwent Police to understand the range of current measures and outputs in place for fraud, in order to identify any additional monitoring requirements. I will also be asking the Chief Constable to provide me with an update on the training in place for officers and staff to deal with fraud.

Information in relation to the work being undertaken by Gwent Police on fraud within the wider context of cybercrime has been provided to the Gwent Joint Audit Committee, and, in September 2021, a similar presentation will be provided to the Police and Crime Panel. These briefings not only assist in making members of the respective meetings aware of the problem faced but also ensures the public are more aware of the vast reach of fraud and the impact on our communities in Gwent.

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. 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. Translation services will be provided.

Fraud affects people from all walks of life and not only affects people financially but can also impact emotionally and leave a lasting problem long after the fraud has taken place. Ensuring that victims of crime receive the very best services, care and support is a priority for me and as mentioned in the Chief Constable's comment below, we have recently launched a Victim Care Unit within Connect Gwent (this is the hub that my office created, but which is now run by Gwent Police, to ensure that a variety of support can be provided to all victims of crime).

"I welcome this report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services that examined the police response to Fraud.

Fraud is a unique crime in its scale and size and can span across force boundaries and even countries. It is also unique in that the effect of the crime often extends beyond the victim and effects society, businesses and the economy; we must always remember it is not a victimless crime. It is therefore important that the response to Fraud is robust and joined up with our partners to have maximum impact.

The effect of the crime often impacts on victims beyond finances. It can cause victims to feel distressed, sad and isolated. Often victims feel great embarrassment or shame at becoming a victim of fraud and have apprehension about reporting the crime. I am determined that Gwent Police is open and accessible to all and we will provide support to victims of all crime to help them cope with the effects of the incident. We have recently launched a Victim Care Unit which acts as a central point of contact for victims from the point of reporting a crime to the conclusion of the criminal justice process. The unit will ensure victims are aware of their rights under the Victims Code of Practice and will support and signpost victims to support services according to their individual needs.

Recognising that fraud is evolving in its nature and scale, in July 2019 we invested in setting up the Fraud Triage Unit. The aim of the unit is to improve the management of fraud investigations, to act as the conduit for Action Fraud referrals, to provide officers with investigation advice and to safeguard victims of fraud. Similarly, as we experience more fraud with a digital footprint we have increased the capacity and capability within our Hi-Tech Crime Unit to provide assistance and resource to investigations that are cyber-enabled.

I recognise some of the areas for improvement from the 2019 report remain outstanding and we have recently provided updates on these to our Force Liaison Lead at the inspectorate to review and consider as complete in conjunction with the findings of the inspection activity completed in Gwent as part of this report. I acknowledge the two recommendations made in this report for me as Chief Constable and will ensure these are considered as part of our service to victims of fraud. Equally, I commit to work with colleagues and partners, locally, regionally and nationally to improve the police response to fraud to reduce the amount fraud offences and improve the service provided to victims".

Please also find an update below to the recommendations requiring a response:

Recommendation 1 By 30 September 2021, chief constables should make sure that their forces are following the guidance issued by the National Police Chiefs' Council Coordinator for Economic Crime about fraud-related calls for service.

When an incident log is created and a key word is used (eg fraud) staff are presented with a quick guide that provides them with prompts and offers consistency in dealing with the victim. The guide includes the information contained within the document referred to above. The First Point of Contact (Control Room) teams have quality assurance processes in place but are considering options to extend this to ensure the quality of call taking, and in this context, to ensure the guidance is being provided consistently.

Recommendation 3: By 31 October 2021, chief constables should adopt the guidance issued in September 2019 by the National Police Chiefs' Council Coordinator for Economic Crime that was aimed at improving the information given to victims when reporting fraud Gwent Police has adopted this guidance. Contained within the quick guide mentioned are the details that must be given to victims of fraud at the point of reporting so that the operator dealing with the contact can provide the required information. This is provided to the caller at the point of contact but the force is exploring additional methods to provide this information to victims to allow them to refer back to it for reference at a later date.

Fraud is an area of crime that affects people from all walks of life and I am pleased that the Chief Constable will continue to find ways to improve and progress work in this area to ensure Gwent Police is providing the best service possible to victims of crime.

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