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Comisiynydd Heddlu a Thro seddu Gwent | Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent: Jane Mudd

The Right Honourable Shabana Mahmood
Home Secretary
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20th January 2026

State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2024-25

As required by statute, I am writing to you to respond to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) report entitled, 'State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2024-25'.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome this report, which provides a helpful overview of policing in England and Wales up to July 2025. Unsurprisingly, many of the issues raised in the report are also issues we are trying to manage locally, some of which were reflected in the recent HMICFRS PEEL inspection into Gwent Police, published earlier this year.

The report raises some important questions that, I am sure, all Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables will be taking into account in their forward planning. This year I published my first Police, Crime and Justice Plan, supported by the Chief Constable's Delivery Plan. The Chief Constable's Plan included the new Operating Model which is underpinned by a new Neighbourhood Policing model and an updated approach to engaging with communities. Improving Trust and confidence is a shared priority for both of us, and flows through both our plans.

The significant reforms that the Chief Constable and I are making continue to evolve, and I feel that the solid foundations we have put in place mean that Gwent is in a good position to address some of the issues raised by His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary's (HMCIC) report.

I note the comment put forth by the Chief Constable in his remarks below.

I welcome the annual State of Policing report by His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, which provides an assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of policing in England and Wales. The report highlights the progress made by police forces in improving the service

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg, a phan ddaw i law, byddwn yn ateb yn y Gymraeg – ni fydd hyn yn gohiri ein hymateb. Os hoffech dderbyn gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg o hyn ymlaen, neu os ydych wedi cael eich gwahoddi gyfweliad neu gyfarfod ac yr hoffech ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg, anfonwch e-bost at: Commissioner@gwent.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.police.uk. Translation services will be provided.

provided to communities. However, the report also highlights the many challenges the police service face.

In Gwent Police, our mission is to improve trust and confidence. The delivery plan is built around three strategic pillars: engagement – listening, involving and updating our communities; operational effectiveness – delivering a service that's responsive, visible and fair, and conduct and culture – creating a workplace that's inclusive, caring and connected. The plan reflects many of the same areas highlighted in the report. By building trust and confidence, Gwent Police will become an inclusive, caring and connected organisation providing an outstanding service for the communities of Gwent.

Making communities safer and building public confidence

In relation to making communities safer and building public confidence, this is a key focus of the Chief Constable and I, as shown in his statements above and our collective plans mentioned earlier. This is certainly a priority for me as outlined in my Police Crime and Justice Plan and will be a key feature that I am committed to continuing to improve.

In relation to the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, part of the Safer Streets mission mentioned in the report, trying to rebuild community confidence by making neighbourhood police more visible and responsive to the communities is one of my key commitments. Any funding for new officers is welcomed, and I must agree with HMICIC that freeing up PCCs and Chief Constables to make local decisions on resourcing would be a positive step.

As examples, through the Safer Streets Summer Initiative (SSSI), hotspot policing, and in partnership with our community safety partners, we aim to strengthen local neighbourhood policing, restore confidence in local communities and take visible action to tackle antisocial behaviour (ASB) and associated crime; key components in my Police, Crime and Justice Plan. The SSSI campaign in particular, brought together Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) across Gwent to make full use of our collective powers in tackling ASB, retail crime, and street crime in town centres and high streets. The primary aim is to prevent disorder and ensure visible, meaningful consequences for those who continue to disrupt our communities. To support this initiative, I allocated £50K to enable CSPs to deliver targeted summer programmes within their local areas. These initiatives helped to strengthen community engagement, particularly with children and young people, our communities and businesses, to deliver safer streets and town centres over the summer period.

Using these extra resources to focus on the crimes and antisocial behaviour that matters most to communities will hopefully drive-up public confidence and trust in policing. This is a shared ambition of all of us. I was pleased to note that, since the last *State of Policing* reports for 2022 and 2023, the decline in public trust and confidence appears to be stabilising. I have undertaken extensive work through public engagement to rebuild trust within our communities. Most recently, in a bid for more transparency and accountability I have begun conducting visible walkabouts with the Chief Constable to discuss community tensions and other concerns raised by residents and holding Public Assurance Forums with him to scrutinise him about local issues. I remain committed to working collaboratively with our communities to foster greater understanding, trust, and unity. By continuing to listen, engage, and act on the concerns of residents, we aim to build stronger, more resilient communities where diversity is celebrated, and every voice is heard.

In addition, I have recently launched a major youth engagement initiative to capture the views of children and young people across Gwent's five local authority areas. Their feedback will

help us understand how young people perceive policing in their communities, how safe they feel, and what they believe public services could do better. This insight is informing the development of a new Children's Charter due to be launched this month, outlining how I will work with children and young people going forward, and how we can tailor services and target funding to better meet their needs. It's important to me that we hear the voices of all communities and take steps to engagement with them more effectively.

Main inspection activity and findings

In relation to the findings from inspection reports, again, many of those findings identified nationally were reflected locally. I have already responded to HMICFRS on the specifics of the Gwent PEEL inspection, so I won't labour those same points here.

As mentioned at the start, with my new Police, Crime and Justice Plan and all of the reforms that are being put in place as a result, I remain assured that the Chief Constable is putting appropriate plans in place to address these key measures. He is reporting progress to me regularly, and I am putting in place enhanced scrutiny arrangements for some of the areas that require improvement. This includes 'Deep Dive' research being commissioned into some of the vulnerability issues identified by the inspection, and introducing a new custody scrutiny panel, the terms of reference of which are being developed.

Victims and the most vulnerable will always be at the forefront of my time as Gwent PCC as highlighted in my Police Crime and Justice Plan. My office has introduced a new Victims and Witnesses Subgroup under the Local Criminal Justice Strategy Board (LCJB) which I chair as PCC. The workstreams under the Supporting Victims and Witnesses priority include improving compliance with the Victims' Code. I am also working closely with criminal justice partners in Wales to implement an interim VCOP compliance monitoring process under the LCJB while we await the finalisation of the national Ministry of Justice compliance monitoring framework. I aim to improve the whole system in Gwent on behalf of victims to ensure they get the outcomes they deserve.

With regard to protecting children, I agree that this is one of the most important roles the police undertake. I was pleased to read that positive progress has been made in this area, and I remain committed to continue improving this line of work. This will be an area that I continue to have enhanced scrutiny over locally. My office and I are in the process of finalising our business plan for the coming years. As part of that we will continue working closely with partners and community organisations to ensure that our work translates into meaningful protection for individuals, particularly the most vulnerable in our society. Some of this will be driven by the previously mentioned Children's Charter.

The police workforce

In relation to the workforce, Gwent Police has not been immune to the challenges posed in the report. We continue to have one of the youngest in-service workforces in England and Wales, and the report highlights the challenges that this brings. I have been monitoring closely the work of the recruitment team and learning and development department of Gwent Police to ensure that our workforce is fit and ready to undertake this demanding, yet highly rewarding, role.

As per my previous comments, although I welcome and support an increase in resources, I do feel that PCCs and Chief Constables should be given greater control over budgets to recruit based on local requirements. We are best placed to understand what structure our

organisations need to meet local demands. This would also mean we could have a more effective balance of police staff alongside police officers. We have, at times, had to have police officers cover traditional police staff roles due to the controls in place by the Home Office. I would welcome a relaxation of those requirements.

Gwent has also been similarly affected by some of the wellbeing challenges seen by other forces. However, a significant amount of investment has been going into the wellbeing offer here in Gwent, such as an enhanced occupational health department and a dedicated wellbeing team working to embed the practical and cultural changes needed across the organisation. Together, they try to ensure officer and staff welfare and wellbeing is at the heart of the force. In October, I reviewed the annual assurance report on this from the Chief Constable to ensure that progress is being made, and it is something I will continue to monitor.

The issues raised by HMICIC in relation to vetting, complaints and conduct are something that Gwent has been putting significant efforts into to tackle in recent years. I have introduced a new scrutiny forum chaired by my Chief Executive to monitor Gwent Police Professional Standards, following a number of high-profile cases here. Gwent will soon be inspected by HMIC specifically on this area and I am confident that the findings will show an improving picture.

Police reform

Once again, I agree with HMCIC that police reform is long overdue. The ever-changing nature of policing means we have to do more to keep up, and I am pleased to be working closely with the Home Office and national partners such as the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners to influence these changes. We all welcome the chance to engage with the landscape reform white paper when it is eventually published. I think it is even more important that the Welsh perspective is taken into account as part of these reforms, due to our working with the devolved Welsh Government and other partners, meaning policing in Wales is so different to England; this context is key.

On that point, I recognise the support in the report for the Home Office to take a more active role in policing, but I am wary of those changes impacting on the independence of PCCs, elected to be the voice of local people. I will continue to champion that our voice and the voice of our local residents and communities remain at the forefront of policing decisions. We should continue to be able to dynamically adapt based on local priorities and changes, alongside any national requirements. I agree with the reflections in the report that the right balance needs to be struck.

In relation to technology, although we are adopting new technologies like automatic facial recognition, virtual investigation tools, and bringing in artificial intelligence software like Microsoft Copilot to improve efficiency, the pace of change outside of policing is staggering. Policing is losing the battle to criminals who can exploit technology far in advance of ourselves. Although I cautiously welcome the proposed greater central coordination and support to developing these technologies for policing, this should not be at the expense of local policing delivery and budgets. Central coordination should not mean years-long, complex, bureaucratic programmes of work that local forces could have delivered better, quicker and cheaper. Again, the right balance needs to be struck.

Finally, on funding, again a review of this is long overdue. Here in Gwent, we have been able to successfully manage our budget in recent years, but without being able to raise council tax

precept higher and higher, and also dipping into reserves, this would not have been possible. I agree with the report that the legacy funding arrangements and formulas mean that local taxpayers in Gwent are now nearly paying more than central government for Gwent Police, and this needs to change. Finally, it is vital that policing has a capital budget to deliver the enhancements in technology and infrastructure so badly needed to deliver the priorities listed throughout the report. It is vital that PCCs play a significant role in future funding discussions.

Overall, I continue to feel reassured that the issues flagged in the report are taken seriously locally. I am confident that we have the right foundations in place to continue our efforts to tackle the challenges facing Gwent Police today, to improve the safety and service for the communities of Gwent and improve their trust and confidence. I look forward to working with the Chief Constable, partners locally, across Wales and HMICFRS, the Home Office and others nationally to further enhance the quality of policing for the public.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane Mudd".

Jane Mudd
Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent