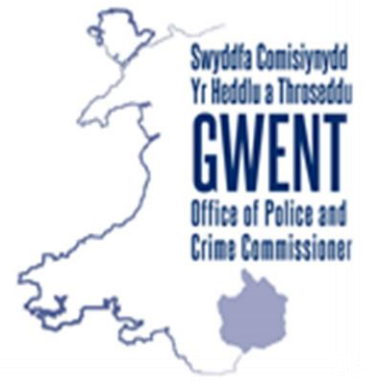


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Comisiynydd Heddlu a Throseddu Gwent | Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent:
Jeff Cuthbert B.Sc., MCIPD

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

30th September 2021

Dear Home Secretary

Neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice System. A Review of Evidence.

As required by statute, I am writing to you to respond to the joint inspection undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report entitled, 'Neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice System. A Review of Evidence'.

I acknowledge this as an area that is becoming more prominent within the criminal justice system. It is important that we are all aware of the impact coming into contact with the police and subsequent criminal justice agencies can have on those with neurodiversity and I welcome the recommendation in the report for an over-arching multi-agency strategy to be developed. This is also an area I am keen to explore from a commissioning perspective in the future.

We must ensure we have access to relevant and accurate information to assist us in supporting neurodivergent members of the public. In Gwent, this information can be accessed by the mental health team based in our control room who are able to view partner agency records to provide information to officers on the frontline. I was pleased to see this excellent initiative acknowledged in the inspection report. In order for this process to work, officers need to be able to identify a member of the public who may be neurodivergent. As stated by the Chief Constable in her comment below, Gwent has invested in awareness training for front line staff with further training planned:

"I welcome this joint report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services which reviewed neurodiversity in the criminal justice system.

Following our submission to a call for evidence from the inspectorates, I was delighted that Gwent Police was identified as having positive practice in this area and was selected as a force for fieldwork activity in March 2021. I am pleased that the importance of understanding of neurodiversity was shown by officers and staff within focus groups and the role of the mental health triage staff based in the control room and their value by frontline staff is referenced within the final report. Since the fieldwork activity, awareness training in this area, which focussed on

autism, has been rolled out to police constables, sergeants, station enquiry officers and force control room staff and will be supplemented by disability awareness training days in 2022. The training will further enhance staff knowledge and therefore improve their confidence whilst supporting individuals with neurodivergent needs’.

Whilst the report does not make any recommendations for me as Chief Constable, I await the publication of the overarching national strategy by the Ministry of Justice and the outcomes of the recommendations. I am committed to making the necessary adjustments to the force’s processes, systems and infrastructure and ensuring that extra support is provided in order to improve the outcomes for neurodivergent people within the criminal justice system.”

Gwent Police has made considerable progress to support those with neurodiversity who come into contact with them and also to provide adjustments where necessary. Detainees who are suspected of having neurodiversity are also referred to a nurse to determine if an Appropriate Adult is needed. If a parent or carer is unavailable, then the organisation Hafal is contacted. Hafal have also received training, along with the force Autism Champions, on how to adapt their approach to best support a detainee with a neurodiverse need.

The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is used by Gwent Police custody units and further support is also being progressed such as the introduction of a traffic light system for those with neurodiversity to explain how they feel, a picture board to explain if there is anything they need as well as information on what happens in custody and what their rights are.

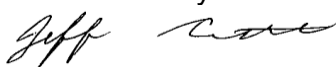
Gwent Police, working in partnership with Trinity Fields School (Trinity Fields School provides education and specialist facilities for children between the ages of 3-19 years with a wide range of learning difficulties), have developed the ‘Trinity Protocol’ which is now being rolled out across Wales by the Welsh National Autism Team. It is similar to the Herbert Protocol and allows relatives and caregivers the opportunity to register a person with Gwent Police, so officers know before they respond to a call that they might be dealing with someone with additional learning needs. This information may assist in communicating with that person as well as ensuring the appropriate support is provided to meet their needs.

Every policy and procedure written or revised by both my office and Gwent Police is subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). The EIA template has now been amended to include a specific section giving consideration to the impact a policy or procedure would have on a person with neurodiversity.

Additionally, dyslexia screening tests are now offered to all new staff and officers on recruitment and to existing staff on referral to ensure we are able to provide appropriate support as necessary.

I am proud of the innovative way in which Gwent Police has been tackling this complex area and hope that the recommendations in this report, once finalised, will enable us to ensure we continue to make progress in supporting vulnerable members of society.

Yours sincerely



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