**Mae’r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg**





Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2023/24 and 2024/25

# **Introduction**

This annual report marks the end of the joint Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and Gwent Police Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024. It highlights some of the key activities and achievements by the OPCC during 2023/24 and 2024/25 in meeting both its equality objectives as set out in the joint plan, and its public duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Due to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections in 2024 and the development and publication of a new Police, Crime and Justice Plan in early 2025, a decision was made to review and roll-over the equality objectives from the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024. Aligning the objectives in the new Equality Plan and Police, Crime and Justice Plan will ensure we provide the best outcomes for our diverse communities. Furthermore, in identifying OPCC-specific equality objectives separate to Gwent Police we will be better able to ensure our organisational independence and effective scrutiny of the force.

The OPCC’s commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is integral to its values, which underpin everything it undertakes across policing. During 2023/24, we also undertook work to prepare for our new Strategic Equality Plan and objectives for the next period. The outcomes of this work were used to inform the decision to roll-over the existing equality objectives and provide assurance of continued relevance during the interim period.

2024 marked the election of the first female Police and Crime Commissioner in Gwent (also the first elected in Wales). The Commissioner took office with a priority commitment to engage with residents and communities across Gwent to further understand what really matters to them. Their feedback was used in the development of the Police, Crime and Justice Plan, which includes equality, diversity and inclusion as one of its foundations ([Police, Crime and Justice Plan | Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner](https://www.gwent.pcc.police.uk/en/about-us/police-and-crime-commissioner/police-crime-and-justice-plan/)).

Across this two-year reporting period, we have continued to focus on working with Gwent Police, partners, and communities to address ongoing issues and challenges such as the abuse of police powers, racial disparity, and systemic racism, and to improve trust and confidence in the police service across our diverse communities.

Our involvement with the Criminal Justice Anti-Racism Action Plan for Wales has also continued. We continue to participate in the Taskforce and subgroups, with staff leading on aspects of the anti-racism work at the Wales level, including organisational culture. As implementation of the Action Plan progresses, it will continue to inform our work to tackle racism and embed racial equality into our systems, policies, and practices, helping to strengthen public confidence in the policing services we provide.

We have also continued to provide funding for projects and programmes to support children and young people at risk of criminality and divert them from the criminal justice system.

This report reflects the work of the OPCC only and a separate report has been published by Gwent Police and scrutinised by the Commissioner. However, this document does include examples of collaborative work carried out between our organisations.

Four strategic equality objectives were set for the period:

* Priority 1 – Supporting Vulnerable People. To investigate and achieve justice for crimes with the greatest impact on vulnerable people, ensuring effective support for victims.
* Priority 2 – Legitimacy and Fairness. To ensure that Gwent Police and the OPCC carry out their activities in a way that is proportionate and non-discriminatory and fosters positive relations between communities and policing.
* Priority 3 – Access, Engagement and Cohesion. To ensure that the services delivered by Gwent Police and the OPCC respond to the views, experiences, and needs of people that identify with protected characteristics, and that the work we do promotes inclusion and cohesion.
* Priority 4 – Work towards a representative workforce and an inclusive workplace culture and ensure that everyone working for Gwent Police and the OPCC are treated fairly and without discrimination.

The objectives were set in conjunction with key stakeholders from the communities of Gwent. A delivery plan is in place to support and track progress and identify further opportunities for development. This forms the basis of this report.

In line with updated College of Policing guidance, we will no longer be using the term ‘Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people’ to refer to large groups of people from different ethnicities.  Instead, we will refer to people of Ethnic Heritage or will use more specific terms when describing different ethnicities.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Police and Crime Plan Annual Reports for 2023/24 and 2024/25, which provide additional context and information on many of the activities highlighted in this document.

More information on the work of the OPCC and the initiatives mentioned in this report can be found on our website [The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent | Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner (pcc.police.uk)](https://www.gwent.pcc.police.uk/).

# **Supporting Vulnerable People**

To investigate and achieve justice for crimes with the greatest impact on vulnerable people, ensuring effective support for victims.

## **What We Have Done**

**Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)**

* We continued to contribute funding to services for survivors of rape and sexual assault, crime which predominantly affect women.
* New Pathways provides Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA) and counselling services for children and adults and hosts the Sexual Assault Referral Centre for Gwent. A specific counselling service is available for children and young people aged between 3 and 25. Across the two-year reporting period, a total of 3,943 referrals were received:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2023/24 | 2024/25 |
| Total number of referrals | 1,862 | 1,081 |
| Individuals identifying as Transgender | N/A | 16 |
| Lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other sexual orientation (where stated); | 275 | 138 |
| Ethnic Heritage background (where stated) | 51 | 36 |
| Children aged under 18 | 374 | 254 |
| Disability disclosed (including neurodiverse conditions, communication, and sensory impairments) | 691 | 574 |

During the last quarter of 2024/25, a drop in referrals was highlighted to the OPCC by New Pathways which may have been linked to an increase in the availability of other support mechanisms, such as social services or GPs. The numbers of referrals will be closely monitored by the service and the OPCC throughout 2025/26.

* + - During 2023/24, Cyfannol Women’s Aid continued to provide ISVA and counselling services, as well as group and peer support, and support for victims of exploitation. Cyfannol’s Awareness Raising project has also continued to engage with lesser heard communities. Resources aimed at specific communities have been added to their website pages, copies of service information posters have been shared and displayed in Polish, Romanian, Bengali, Arabic, and Ukrainian.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 2023/24 |
| Total number of referrals | 162 |
| Lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other sexual orientation (where stated); | 19 |
| Ethnic Heritage background (where stated) | 6 |
| Children aged under 18 | 9 |
| Disability disclosed (including neurodiverse conditions, communication, and sensory impairments) | 59 |

* During National Stalking and Harassment Week, we worked with Gwent Police’s Stalking and Harassment Officer, the Gwent Regional VAWDASV Team, Cyfannol Women’s Aid, Llamau, and New Pathways to promote the theme ‘Standing Against Stalking, Supporting Young People’. National data from The Suzy Lamplugh Trust highlights that more and more young people aged 16-24 are contacting the national stalking helpline to seek support in how to deal with unwanted behaviours.   
  We visited The University of South Wales Newport campus, Ebbw Vale Learning Zone, and Torfaen Learning Zone Coleg Gwent campuses, engaging with over 100 young people to help them recognise unwanted behaviour, understand the difference between stalking and harassment, and where to seek help.
* Older residents are often some of our most vulnerable and can be particularly at risk of abuse and exploitation. We were pleased to once again join Age Cymru, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Cyfannol Women’s Aid, Gwent Police, and other partners to deliver sessions to community groups across Gwent to raise mark World Elder Abuse Day. Throughout the week-long roadshow, we provided information and advice on types of abuse and where to get help.
* To mark White Ribbon Day in November 2024, we hosted the ‘Words Matter’ exhibition of artworks that aims to prompt conversations about violence against women and girls at Gwent Police Headquarters. With more than 20 artworks, the exhibition explores the themes of violence, misogyny and victim blaming and was viewed by police officers and staff from across Gwent in the lead up to a White Ribbon Day partnership event and round table, hosted by the Commissioner.
* During 2024/25, we participated in the Protected Communities and Characteristics Subgroup under the Gwent VAWDASV Board. The group brings together local partners to better understand the impact of VAWDASV on people from protected communities or sharing protected characteristics such as ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and gender reassignment. In doing so, the group seeks to inform partnership work to address VAWDASV and improve the support provided to individuals within those groups who may be less likely to engage with the police and / or support services.

**Hate Crime and Disability-Related Harassment**

* Each year we mark Hate Crime Awareness Week. In 2023/24, we focused on faith-based hate, attending five community events across Gwent with partners including Gwent Police, and speaking to over 400 people to provide advice, guidance, and support to help raise awareness of hate crime and how to report. During 2024/25, we joined with partners from Gwent Police and Victim Support to provide advice and guidance to students. We visited the University of South Wales in Newport to raise awareness of the support services available and the importance of reporting incidents.
* We undertook a staff training session on hate crime with Victim Support’s Wales Hate Support Centre. This provided a foundational understanding of what hate crime is, how it affects people, and how to signpost people for help and support.
* OPCC staff participate in Gwent Police’s Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel. Working with community members, the Panel aims to provide independent scrutiny of cases to identify good practice and areas for improvement in the way the police record and investigate hate crimes.
* The number of hate crimes reported to Gwent Police decreased by 6% in 2024/25 when compared to 2023/24, reflecting the trend seen across Wales in the same period.

The numbers of religious, transphobic, disability and homophobic hate crimes recorded saw a decrease during 2024/25, while the number of racially motivated crimes recorded increased.

We recognise that hate crimes remain a concern for our diverse communities and the Commissioner has made a specific commitment to tackling hate crime within the Police, Crime and Justice Plan.

* We continue to develop our understanding of people’s lived experience of hate crime through our membership of forums such as the Criminal Justice Anti-Racism Taskforce (Wales) and Welsh Government’s Hate and Community Tensions Board Cymru.

**Early Intervention and Prevention**

* We worked with the Cwmbran Centre for Young People (CCYP), Gwent Police, and Torfaen County Borough Council, to introduce a new youth outreach partnership scheme to tackle antisocial behaviour in Cwmbran. Using funding from the Home Office’s Safer Streets fund, youth workers from the CCYP targeted problem areas to engage with young people and encourage them to attend the centre instead of hanging around shopping centres and other public areas.   
  The centre now receives more than 700 visits from young people each month, with local businesses and the police reporting improvements in antisocial behaviour incidents. Positive feedback has also been received from the young people accessing the centre, including feeling safer and being supported by the staff.
* During 2023/24,we continued to support provision of the Early Action Together programme in Newport. The multi-agency programme, linked to an earlier Adverse Childhood Experiences project, supported the identification of vulnerable children, providing early intervention to keep them out of the criminal justice system, break the generational cycle of crime, and improve their lives. During the 12-month period:
* 199 families benefitted from the programme;
* 294 children and young people in these families benefitted either directly or indirectly from the support;
* 27 beneficiaries identified with ethnic heritage backgrounds, with the highest number identifying as ‘Any Other Ethnic Group’.
* Crimestoppers and the St Giles Trust have continued to educate, inform, and work with young people in Gwent to prevent and reduce serious violence. Funded by the OPCC, the programmes raise awareness of the dangers of serious and organised crime, helping to divert young people away from involvement. Participants engaging with the services are from a range of backgrounds with differing support needs and factors, including mental health and cost of living pressure, which may influence their behaviour.

During the reporting period, support was provided on a range of issues, including risk of criminal exploitation due to peer pressure, transition from youth to adult services and continued access to support, and mental health and dysregulated feelings as well as for knife crime and serious youth violence.

* Young people in Gwent have also continued to engage with lifesaving sessions run by the national charity, Street Doctors, funded as part of a wider programme of education linked to the Knife Angel’s visit to Gwent in November 2022. Street Doctors aims to put young people at the centre of first aid provision and empowers them to become lifesavers in their communities. During 2023/24, more than 90 young people participated in the sessions that could help them save lives in the event of a stabbing. During 2024/25, 50 sessions were delivered to 966 young people, promoting a culture of responsibility and intervention, while reinforcing messages of anti-violence among participants.
* During the reporting period, we provided funding to Kidcare4u to deliver a weekly Saturday club, run from the Pillgwenlly Millennium Centre, with staff and volunteers drawn from the local area. Children aged between five and 16 can enjoy activities such as crafts, sports, and drama. As well as activities that encourage young people to keep heathy, build their confidence and make friends, the charity also provides extra educational support for those who need it. Not only is this project keeping young people off the streets and giving them something positive to do, but the wider support also offered to the young people and their families will have long term benefits for their future.
* In 2023/24, we joined officers from Gwent Police and Newport Youth Justice Service for a ‘crimes and consequences’ workshop at Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed, run as part of a six-week education diversion project to inform young people about the dangers and risks of negative behaviours. During the session, pupils discussed the consequences of criminal behaviour and talked about the impact of anti-social behaviour, and how they think it affects people, their wider communities, and the emergency services. Other sessions included presentations from partners including drug awareness from Gwent Drug and Alcohol Service (GDAS), county lines and exploitation by St Giles Trust, and the impact of crime on victims.
* In 2023/24, we joined with partners to celebrate County in the Community’s 10-year anniversary. County in the Community carries out youth engagement sessions at areas of high need in Newport through sports and other activities, and the OPCC provided funding to extend the number of sessions offered each week. The project aims to inspire young people to make positive change within their lives and within their community, providing disciple and structure, and helping them to stay healthy and motivated. This work is helping to reduce localised anti-social behaviour in the community, providing a safe space and a safe face in their communities, and support from adult mentors, while providing long-term benefits towards happier and healthier futures.
* We continued to contribute funding to Positive Futures, an inclusion programme that uses sport as a tool to engage with young people and discourage anti-social behaviour. Many young people and families who access Positive Futures are marginalised and struggle to access mainstream services, especially if English is not their first language. 838 scheduled diversionary sessions took place across Gwent in 2023/24, with 889 offered in 2024/25. In addition, 130 reactive Positive Futures sessions were held in 2023/24, with 793 held in 2024/25 to tackle specific anti-social behaviour issues identified by. police and Community Safety partners  
  Of those engaging with sessions across the two-year period:
* Around 3,500 people identified with an ethnic heritage backgrounds;
* Around 440 people disclosed a disability.

Participants reported improved health and wellbeing, greater life skills, and increased engagement in education, employment, and training.

* In February 2025, The Commissioner joined members of the Newport Female Runner’s Network as part of an initiative from Gwent Police to keep runners safe. Officers have been working with Welsh Athletics to offer advice and guidance to women and girls about how to look after their personal safety while running. Women who experience any harassment or threatening behaviour on their runs are encouraged to contact the police and report it. They are also introduced to members of their local policing team as a way of breaking down barriers and building relationships between the police and communities.

**Supporting Victims**

* In addition to the specific focus on victim-survivors of VAWDASV, we have continued to provide access to specialist services for victims of crime within Connect Gwent, the multi-agency hub funded by the OPCC. These services included:
  + Age Cymru;
  + Umbrella Cymru gender and sexual diversity support service;
  + Umbrella Cymru’s ‘RE:Live’ children and young people’s service;
  + A mental health and wellbeing practitioner; and
  + Victim Support (general service).

Service user data shows that the numbers of people of Ethnic Heritage, and individuals disclosing disabilities, or gender or sexual diversity are low. We continue to work on the effective recording of service user demographic data as within our contract management processes.

* During 2024/25, the OPCC undertook work to re-commission our current victim service provision. In a change to the multi-agency arrangements, a single provider has been appointed to deliver support to both children and adult victims of crime. The OPCC has worked closely with the existing and new service providers to ensure the effective transfer of individual receiving support during this time. The new single service will commence in April 2025.
* The OPCC has also been working to develop analytical tools for our commissioned services which will support improved performance and data monitoring, including for diversity information. This will help to inform decisions regarding specific support needs and direct engagement with communities to raise awareness of the services and support available to them should they become a victim of crime.

# **Legitimacy and Fairness**

To ensure that Gwent Police and the OPCC carry out their activities in a way that is proportionate and non-discriminatory and fosters positive relations between communities and policing.

## **What We Have Done**

* We responded to the Home Office’s consultation on the refreshed national Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels, undertaken under the previous Conservative Government. We will use the draft Guidance to identify opportunities to further improve the community scrutiny arrangements in place for both the OPCC and Gwent Police.
* In October 2024, the Commissioner joined a panel discussion on discrimination and anti-racism as part of the ‘Creating an Anti-Racist Wales’ conference in Cardiff. Hosted by Policy Insight Wales, the conference brought together leaders from across Wales to examine progress that has been made under the Welsh Government’s Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan. Panellists spoke about how the public sector can take practical steps to combat racism and discrimination.

**Stop and Search and Use of Force**

* Across the two years, we held seven independent Legitimacy Scrutiny Panel (LSP) sessions which reviewed a dip sample of stop and search and use of force incidents through body worn video and Gwent Police data. Specific focus is given to race and ethnicity, children and young people, and mental health. Operated by the OPCC, the LSP supports the Commissioner’s scrutiny of Gwent Police’s use of powers and provides independent assurance for how they are used.

During this time, the Panel:

* + Added stop and search incidents involving a more thorough search (MTS) or exposure of intimate parts (EIP) search (also currently referred to as ‘strip searches’) of children to its core scrutiny themes.
  + Identified a range of opportunities for improvement, including:
    - The strengthening of grounds for stop searches;
    - Comment on the rationale for certain encounters;
    - Improving engagement with communities around the use of police powers; and
    - Use of language and communication linked to use of force, particularly for incidents involving vulnerable people.
  + Provided recognition of good practice by officers when engaging with members of the public (particularly children and vulnerable people), where exemplary grounds are provided, or for professional conduct and positive outcomes in challenging circumstances.
* During 2024/25, we devised and implemented a specific scrutiny process for stops and searches conducted under Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994(CJPOA). Section 60 allows police officers to conduct stops and searches in anticipation of, in after, serious violence, and allows ‘no suspicion’ searches in a defined geographical area. This will help to ensure that Gwent Police use Section 60 powers appropriately and follow all due process in granting authorisation for use, as well as helping to provide greater transparency and public assurance.
* In December 2024, the LSP held its first Section 60 scrutiny session following an authorisation in Newport in November. Members reviewed all stops and searches conducted during the 24-hour period in question and were satisfied that Gwent Police had followed due process for the authorisation. Members were also satisfied that all the incidents reviewed were appropriate.

Over the year, we have remained satisfied that the Gwent Police continues to focus on the right areas for improvement.

* We have continued to contribute to internal police governance and scrutiny processes for stop and search and use of force to ensure an appropriate focus on identifying and understanding or addressing disproportionality, including for race and ethnicity and children and young people. Updates from LSP sessions are provided to Gwent Police’s internal Coercive Powers Scrutiny meetings to help raise awareness of the activity and outcomes. This also supports continuous improvement processes for stop and search and use of force and allows further opportunity to discuss members’ observations with a wider operational audience.
* During 2024/25, we arranged for LSP members to visit the operational training unit to observe public order and use of Taser training, both of which fall under use of force. Following an eight-day intensive course during their initial training period, all police officers must undertake yearly refresher sessions in public safety, which includes stop and search, and managing detainees in custody. Officers trained in Taser use must also complete annual training to ensure their skills are up to date. In February, the Commissioner also had opportunity to view these training exercises. Both the LSP members and the Commissioner were reassured by the depth of knowledge and expertise of the trainers, and the robustness of the training exercises.

**Community Confidence in the Use of Police Powers**

* During 2023/24, the OPCC was presented with a silver Quality Assurance award by the Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Association. The national Quality Assurance Framework assesses how well schemes comply with the code of practice that governs custody visiting. The award, lasting for two years, demonstrates that the OPCC has achieved and maintained a high quality and effective ICV Scheme for Gwent.

Any issues identified during visits were fed back to Gwent Police for action. During the period, the Scheme noted the following:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2023/24 | 2024/25 |
| Number of detainees that accepted a visit | 278 | 384 |
| Number of detainees aged 17 and under | 26 | 36 |
| Number of detainees that identified as female | 62 | 112 |
| Number of detainees that identified as Black or Black British | 17 | 25 |
| Number of detained that identified as Asian or Asian British | 13 | 19 |
| Number of detainees that identified as Mixed Race | 4 | 1 |
| Number of detainees that identified with other minority ethnicities | 12 | 20 |

* We implemented an Equality and Diversity Policy specific to our volunteer schemes. This will help to ensure that the processes and practices attached to our schemes promote equality of opportunity for all local people and communities, challenge discrimination, and support the recruitment and selection of volunteers from underrepresented communities and diverse groups.
* We continued to participate in Gwent Police’s Disproportionality in Police Custody Scrutiny Panel, reviewing custody records and video footage to ensure that detainees are treated fairly and appropriately. Specific focus is given to children and young people, people with vulnerabilities, and people of ethnic heritage. Recommendations have included:
  + Reviewing detentions involving more thorough and exposure of intimate parts searches and ensuring use and recording of Appropriate Adults;
  + Greater clarity of custody data for people of ethnic heritage; and
  + The availability of translation services and the potential impact on the length of detention for some individuals.
* During the reporting period, we continued to work with Gwent Police and partners to better understand the use of stop searches of children involving more thorough or exposure of intimate parts searches. Recommendations from the Task and Finish Group activity were presented to and agreed by the Safeguarding Board, including:
* Arrangements for data reporting to the Board;
* Safeguarding referrals for children who are searched by the police;
* Concerns linked to the use of the term ‘strip search’; and
* Considerations for vulnerable adults.

In March 2025, the group reconvened to scrutinise the effectiveness of the process for safeguarding referrals which went live in October 2024. This identified areas for improvement in the way referrals were being made into safeguarding teams, as well as the numbers of referrals being made. To ensure an effective scrutiny process that drives improvement, the group has proposed to extend the timescale of the work for a minimum of 12 months.

**Public Complaints**

* We undertook six monthly police complaints files dip samples to ensure public complaint processes have been followed correctly, making recommendations where any areas for improvement were identified.
* We conducted regular scrutiny of performance relating to Gwent Police’s professional standards, both public facing and internal, to understand any trends in complaints and provide challenge for positive change. Diversity data is monitored within these reports and consideration given to identifying any discrimination or bias across the activity.

**Transparency**

* We have continued to contribute to and support the implementation of the Criminal Justice Anti-Racism Action Plan for Wales. The OPCC is a member of the Wales Anti-Racism Taskforce and the Deputy PCC has continued to provide leadership for the Community Engagement Workstream. OPCC staff also contribute to the related workstream subgroups responsible for driving and delivering change under the Implementation Plan.

An Annual Report has been published which sets out progress under the Plan: [Criminal Justice Anti-Racism Action Plan for Wales Annual Report 2023-24 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-justice-anti-racism-action-plan-for-wales-annual-report-23-24/criminal-justice-anti-racism-action-plan-for-wales-annual-report-2023-24), including:

* + An oversight session on hate crime conducted by the Community Engagement Network in the summer of 2023. This enabled external organisations to understand current hate crime reporting processes and victim provisions in Wales. Attendees received some reassurances of work taking place to enable victim-centred reporting across Wales, and also led to recommendations being made by the network on how police forces and others could improve public communication on these issues.
  + Individual criminal justice agencies in Wales undertaking positive action to aim to increase the representation of staff from Ethnic Heritage backgrounds. A workforce representation workstream has been set up under the Plan, which is scoping out all the current positive action work taking place across criminal justice in relation to recruitment and progression. When the scoping is completed, good practice and gaps will be identified, so that minimum standards can be developed and applied across Wales.
  + Towards the end of 2023, steps were taken to bring together the Welsh police forces with Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association, and third sector partners and individuals to discuss how to meet the distinct needs of Gypsy Roma Traveller communities in the Plan’s delivery. The issues of racism for Gypsy Roma Traveller people remain a serious concern and there is a need for enhanced partnership working to address some of the disadvantages and discrimination that these communities face. A Wales working group will commence in 2024.
  + A review and amendment of the governance surrounding delivery of the Plan to promote inclusion and anti-racist ways of working. This has included increasing the representation of racially minoritised people and independent experts involved in overseeing the work and providing views on progress.
  + Establishment of a ‘Training & Cultural Competency’ workstream to effectively co-ordinate the activity required under this commitment. During 2023/24 a comprehensive amount of work took place to scope the existence of current Anti-Racism and Cultural Competency training and resources being used across criminal justice. This has been to understand the levels of current provision and the gaps to address.
* Towards the end of 2023/24, we commenced a pilot of a new thematic scrutiny process to provide greater oversight and reassurance of Gwent Police’s performance. The Scrutiny Assurance Forum provides a thematic focus across strategic and operational areas, with reviews carried out for custody, victims, hate crime, children and young people, and stop and search.

# **Access, Engagement and Cohesion**

To ensure that the services delivered by Gwent Police and the OPCC respond to the views, experiences, and needs of people that identify with protected characteristics, and that the work we do promotes inclusion and cohesion.

## **What We Have done**

**Access to Policing Services and Information**

* We continued to work to ensure we provide a website and published information that is accessible to the public, particularly people with different disabilities. All staff were provided with an information session to support this work and embed accessible practices into our business processes.
* We participated in the Welsh Government’s Disability Rights Taskforce: Access to Justice Working Group. The group brought together people with lived experience and expertise from across Wales, disabled people’s organisations, criminal justice bodies, Welsh Government and criminal justice policy leads to better understand the barriers faced by disabled people and develop a set of recommendations to improve disabled people’s access to justice.
* We maintained our accreditation under national schemes:
  + Disability Confident – Committed
  + Children and Young People’s National Participation Standards

**Community Engagement**

* The Commissioner also joined partners and children and young people for the annual EYST Wales Youth Awards. Held in Newport and Torfaen, the youth awards celebrate the talent, resilience and spirit of the young people that EYST work with.
* The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner has continued to engage with the Wales Criminal Justice Community Engagement Network, which provides opportunity to hear about and learn from the experiences of people from ethnic heritage backgrounds, providing a collective opportunity to influence change in the criminal justice system in Wales.
* We supported a community information day for learners, organised by our partners Eyst – Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales, and joined Barod, Melo Cymru, and the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board held at the Torfaen Learning Zone. We spoke to people about a range of topics, including the role of the Commissioner and the work of the OPCC.
* We continued to engage with members of Gwent Police’s Independent Advisory Group (IAG) for internal and independent scrutiny processes and contribute to and support IAG meetings.
* We engaged with over 2,500 people during our Precept engagement. Of those respondents:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2023/24 | 2024/25 |
| % that identified as female | 52.1% | 52.1% |
| % that identified as transgender | 0% | 0.3% |
| % that identified with minority ethnicities | 7.5% | 8.3% |
| % that declared a disability | 18.5% | 18.5% |
| % that identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or other sexual orientation | 3.3% | 3.3% |

When conducting public engagement, the OPCC aspires to achieve a representative sample across our communities. The diversity information collected is used to inform and direct our engagement planning processes. During 2023/24, we noted a 0% self-identification by Transgender respondents to the survey, who may have opted not to disclose their gender identity to us (a ‘prefer not to say’ option is included for respondents). However, we were pleased to see an increase, albeit small, during our 2024/25 survey activity, and we hope to build on this during future engagement work.

* During March 2025, the Commissioner launched the new Police, Crime and Justice Plan for Gwent, which was developed following an extensive public and partner engagement process. In addition to the five priorities, the Plan includes equality, diversity and inclusion as one of its foundations - [Police, Crime and Justice Plan | Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner](https://www.gwent.pcc.police.uk/en/about-us/police-and-crime-commissioner/police-crime-and-justice-plan/). We engaged with over 1,600 people in the development of the Plan. Of those respondents:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | % |
| % that identified as female | 54.4% |
| % that identified as transgender | 0.3% |
| % that identified with minority ethnicities | 5.7% |
| % that declared a disability | 15.0% |
| % that identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or other sexual orientation | 3.4% |

* In Wales, Black History Month also marks the launch of Race Council Cymru’s Black History Cymru 365, a year-long celebration of the rich cultural history and heritage, as well as the modern-day triumphs, of Black people in Wales. The Welsh Police and Crime Commissioners have been annual sponsors of Black History Cymru 365, which includes sponsoring the ‘Public Services to Wales’ prize at the Black History Wales National Youth and Community Awards.
* The OPCC also sponsored the National Black Police Association conference in Cardiff , hosted by South Wales Police in 2023. It was an opportunity to listen and learn from policing colleagues and speakers from across the UK, including Dr Stuart Lawrence who spoke movingly on the life and legacy of his brother Stephen.
* The Commissioner joined community members to celebrate the grand reopening of The House – the home of Bethel Community Church – in Newport. The church was devastated by a fire in 2018 and underwent extensive restoration prior to reopening in September 2024. The church serves as a hub for the whole community and helps to support refugees in Newport, along with providing many other services to local residents.
* Together with Gwent Police, partners, and our communities, we commemorated and celebrated several key events, including:
* Holocaust Memorial Day
* LGBT+ History Month
* Pride Cymru
* International Women’s Day
* Stephen Lawrence Day
* Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller History Month
* Windrush Day
* Black History Month
* Dwarfism Awareness Day
* Eid
* We engaged with other community groups, events, and partnerships to discuss matters such as public perceptions of policing, funding, the role of the Commissioner and the work of the OPCC, and any matters of concern that they might have, including:
  + Maindee Festival;
  + Pride in the Port (Newport);
  + Caerphilly Pride;
  + Pontypool Youth Project;
  + Cwmbran Over 50s Forum;
  + Torfaen Sports Development Girl’s Inclusivity World Cup;
  + Coleg Gwent Freshers Week;
  + Croesyceiliog School’s Future Pathways Career Fair;
  + Coleg Gwent Wellbeing Days for students.

**Children and Young People**

* The OPCC was awarded the Children and Young People's Participation Standards Charter for the second time. The charter recognises the OPCC’s continued commitment to ensuring the seven National Participation Standards are followed when working with children and young people. The participation standards reinforce the importance of listening to the voices of children and young people.
* We joined with partners to celebrate the achievements of some inspirational young people from our diverse communities in Newport, who were recognised for the hard work and dedication they have shown in engaging with local projects and helping others. The event was organised by a partnership of projects, some of which are funded by the OPCC, including Community House, the Sanctuary, Maindee Primary School, Newport City Council’s youth service, Newport Live, Newport Yemeni Community Association, and Positive Futures.   
  These organisations are working together as part of the Levelling the Playing Field partnership, and all provide targeted intervention to children and young people at risk of becoming involved with crime or antisocial behaviour. By offering children and young people the chance to participate in positive activities, giving them a safe space and a safe face in their communities, and be supported by adult mentors, we are helping to reinforce good behaviours and setting the groundwork that will allow them to have a happy and healthy future.
* We worked with a group of young people from Cwmbran to better understand their personal experiences of policing and how they feel when they interact with police officers in Gwent. Their feedback was used to help shape future work of Gwent Police and the OPCC. Engagement of this nature helps us to develop better relationships with communities and ensure that children and young people have their voices heard.
* We supported Gwent Police, partners, and our communities throughout the October half term break at a range of events, including:
  + A ‘Trick or Trunk’ event at Bargoed Morrisons, organised by the Parent Network Caerphilly. Partners decorated their car boots and children were encouraged to trick or treat each car, finding out more about each organisation and getting a special treat with every visit. It was a very successful event with hundreds of children taking part during the afternoon.
  + The annual ‘Scare on the Square’ in Brynmawr, where families are encouraged to visit businesses, organisations, and stalls throughout the town. Always a very popular event, hundreds of families turned out to take part.
  + We also joined our funded partners, Positive Futures, at an outreach session in Pillgwenlly in Newport aimed at educating children on the dangers of fireworks. The session engaged children and young people with different sports and activities, while staff discussed the risks of using fireworks illegally.
* We expanded our safe spaces workshops in schools across Gwent, holding over 18 sessions with more than 1,000 children. The sessions helped pupils to talk about the areas in their community where they feel safe or unsafe and discuss the reasons for their feelings. The information was collated and fed back to the local neighbourhood policing teams as well as the schools and the local authority to enable us to work together to address some of the issues raised.
* We held a Youth Question Time event which saw more than 70 young people take part in discussing themes such as the safety of women and girls, mental health support for children and young people, and concerns about vaping. This year’s panel included the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Eleri Thomas, Assistant Chief Constable of Gwent Police, Mark Hobrough; Johanna Robinson, National Advisor for Violence Against Women; and Carol Andrews, Youth Champion for Caerphilly County Borough Council.
* We have continued to support the Heddlu Bach programme in Gwent, visiting schools in Pontypool and Raglan to talk about the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner and how Commissioners work with the police to help keep communities safe. The Scheme is a fun, interactive way for children to learn new skills, gain confidence in their abilities and play a part in their local community. It builds trust and confidence between the police and children from an early age, while also helping to create a greater sense of cohesion within the wider community.
* We awarded £423,000 to organisations or projects supporting children and young people across Gwent as part of the PCC’s Police Community Fund:
  + Cyfannol Women’s Aid (pan-Gwent).
  + Senghenydd Youth Drop-In Centre (Caerphilly).
  + Urban Circle (Blaenau Gwent).
  + Brynmawr Interact (Brynmawr).
  + Media Academy Wales (pan-Gwent).
  + Newport Mind (Newport).

Other projects awarded second- or third-year funding include:

* + Newport Yemeni Community Association (Newport).
  + Community House (Newport).
  + Cwmbran Centre for Young People (Torfaen).
  + Ethnic Youth Support Team (Newport).
* We contributed £65,000 the High Sheriff’s Community Fund to offer localised support to children and young people to help create opportunities that steer young people away from crime and anti-social behaviour.

# **Creating an Inclusive Workforce and Promoting Fairness**

Work towards a representative workforce and an inclusive workplace culture and ensure that everyone working for Gwent Police and the OPCC are treated fairly and without discrimination.

## **What We Have Done**

* We were invited to participate in the reinvigorated Training, Cultural Competency, and Workforce Representation Subgroup under the Criminal Justice Anti-Racism Action Plan. The outcomes of the work will help to shape the OPCC’s progress in becoming an anti-racist organisation, while providing opportunities to work with partners in achieving the aims of the Criminal Justice Anti-Racism Action Plan. During 2024/25, the OPCC lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion was appointed a co-lead on the Culture strand of this workstream. Specific work was undertaken to benchmark criminal justice approaches to measuring ‘culture’ within organisations which will be used to devise a single methodology to reviewing annually any changes to workforce experiences.
* The Commissioner spoke to policing leaders from across the UK about the work Gwent Police is doing to drive culture change within the organisation. The annual Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and National Police Chief’s Council Partnership Summit brings together senior leaders, politicians and experts to discuss some of the most complex issues in law enforcement and criminal justice. The Commissioner and a senior Gwent Police colleague presented the work the organisation has been doing to help improve culture, with a particular focus on misogyny and discrimination at the November 2024 summit.
* We joined with Gwent Police to celebrate a Trans Day of Visibility event in Police HQ, hosted by the Wales LGBTQ+ Police Network. The lunch and learn event was led by Reverand Sarah Jones who shared some of her own experiences, while breaking down some common myths about trans lives. The event concluded with a question-and-answer session, aiming to support learning and greater inclusivity towards trans people, whether in our communities, or as colleagues, friends or in our families.

**Positive Action**

* We have continued to scrutinise Gwent Police’s progress towards a more representative workforce. At the end of March 2025, female police officers remained underrepresented at 38% of the total establishment (females account for 51% of the population of Gwent based on the 2021 Census).

The disparity in ethnic heritage representation also remained at the end of the year, with 3.8% of police officers and 2.5% of police staff identifying with an Ethnic Heritage background.

* OPCC workforce data is published on our website. While we continue to recognise a lack of diversity across the organisation, we have successfully increased the proportion of staff from an ethnic heritage background to 8.3%.

We continue to engage with our communities, raising awareness of the roles and responsibilities of OPCC staff and any vacancies. We will also use positive action to help attract applicants from diverse backgrounds.

* We supported a behind the scenes visit to Gwent Police Headquarters by children and young people from Newport’s Kerala community. The children aged 11-17 years were given a tour of the building and shown around the Control Room, which handles 999 and 101 calls. They were also introduced to officers from the Roads Policing Unit and had the opportunity to meet some for Gwent’s police dogs. The visit intended to build bridges with community members and the police, and to give the young people an insight into the career opportunities available within policing.

**Wellbeing in the Workplace**

* We continue to support improvements in the support services on offer for police officers and staff members. Through in-house and third-party groups, a wide range of services provide physical, emotional, and psychological support for those who may be under pressure professionally or personally.   
  Regular OPCC Staff Away Days during the year included engagement on workplace issues, opportunities for staff development, and awareness-raising on wellbeing matters and support.
* A range of support networks, groups, and services are available to OPCC staff, including:
  + Christian Police Association
  + Enable – Gwent Police Disability & Carers Network
  + Gwent Police Ethnic Minority Association
  + Gender Equality Network
  + Gwent LGBT Branch
  + Men’s Health Forum
  + Police Sport Gwent
  + Unison
  + Welsh Speakers and Learner’s Network
  + The Welfare Fund
  + Wellbeing Ambassadors
  + The Chaplaincy Service

We also undertake regular engagement with the leads of most of these groups to better understand and provide support to address any issues they are experiencing.

# **Conclusion**

During the reporting period, the work undertaken to prepare for our new Strategic Equality Plan included community and staff engagement, a review of the OPCC’s progress against the Joint Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24, a review of other plans and policies with relevance to equality, diversity, and inclusion (such as the Criminal Justice Anti-Racism Action Plan), and any other influences across policing.

Due to the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2024 and a new incoming Commissioner for Gwent, a decision was made to roll-over the priorities from the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24. Following the launch of the new Police, Crime and Justice Plan in March 2025, a new Strategic Equality Plan will be and published by the summer.

A Delivery Plan will be implemented to support the activity required to achieve the aims of the new Equality Plan. Progress will be monitored through our internal governance processes.

Other general activities for 2025/26 will include:

* Creation of a fund to support delivery of initiatives under the new Strategic Equality Plan.
* Continued scrutiny to provide focus and challenge to Gwent Police regarding delivery of their new Equality Plan.
* Reviewing the LSP process, membership, and Terms of Reference to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.
* Continued work with partners to review and provide assurance for scrutiny of police searches involving children.
* Working with Gwent Police and partners to develop a Children’s Charter.
* Continue to provide a focus on tackling racism, misogyny, and homophobia within Gwent Police and the OPCC.
* Improve the use of feedback from the Staff Support Networks to support improvements to workforce culture and organisational development.

# **Contact Details**

For more information on our work related to equality, diversity, and inclusion, please contact:

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Cwmbrân

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