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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

30th September 2021

Dear Home Secretary,

HMICFRS Report: State of Policing – The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales

As required by statute, I am writing to you with my comments on Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary's (HMCIC) report, 'State of Policing – The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2020'.

2020 was a year unlike any other ever experienced in policing. The coronavirus pandemic forced rapid change in the way we worked, and I am incredibly proud of the way that response was handled in Gwent. Our service provision was not disrupted as we had already invested in technology which allowed the majority of staff to work remotely. Whilst remote working was not possible for frontline police officers and our community support officers, they continued to attend the workplace, under very stressful and difficult circumstances, knowing the risk they were not only placing themselves in but the risk they were also placing their families in. I will be forever grateful to them for their dedication in keeping our communities in Gwent as safe as possible during this troubling time.

Although the situation is progressing and we are learning to live with coronavirus, the pandemic is by no means behind us. The virus is still prevalent and continues to pose a risk to our communities, but, as stated in this report, we are now also facing the fallout from the pandemic. The strain currently facing our mental health support services is overwhelming, people have suffered and are still suffering from the effects of the pandemic and the lack of support made available during this time. This in turn can lead to calls for help to the police, placing our already stressed resources under even further strain. It is for this reason that I welcome the joint approach taken by HMICFRS in undertaking joint inspections with the other criminal justice inspectorates

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.

as well as with agencies such as Care Quality Commission, Ofsted, Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales. It is imperative that a joint response is co-ordinated to the problems experienced in policing as we are often the service of last resort. If support, such as mental health support, is provided earlier to people in need, the demand on the police is likely to decrease and we can focus on our main aim which as stated in the report is the prevention and suppression of crime and disorder.

It is also a joint priority for the Chief Constable and me to ensure that we provide the best support we are able to our officers and staff, this year in particular has been testing and I am pleased that the report acknowledges the difficult job that our officers do.

I have included a comment from the Chief Constable, Pam Kelly, below:

I welcome Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary's annual assessment of policing in England and Wales. The report rightly recognises that 2020 was an exceptional and extraordinarily difficult year for policing. I am hugely proud of the way in which my officers and staff adapted to policing the pandemic to meet the challenges and continue to protect the communities of Gwent.

I am pleased that the report draws attention to the difficult challenges police officers and staff face whilst carrying out their duties and the impact this can have on their mental health. As Chief Constable, wellbeing is a priority and I am committed to providing the best support and advice to all officers and staff. To this end, I have appointed a force Wellbeing Lead and introduced many initiatives to ensure that officers and staff have the appropriate services available to help them continue to protect and reassure our communities.

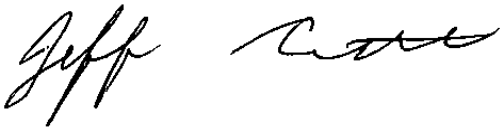
The report highlights the pressures on the criminal justice system and mental health services and the implications for policing. As Chief Constable, I am committed to working closely with partners to resolve wider issues. I have recently appointed a police chair for a Strategic Coordinating Group in response to unprecedented health related demand, in order to mitigate the associated impact this is having across wider partnership organisations and our communities. Similarly, the report highlights the need for more effective collaboration between police forces. In Wales, I work with Chief Constable colleagues and Police and Crime Commissioners through the All-Wales Policing Group on matters of collaboration. I am delighted with the achievements of the Group to date but acknowledge that there is further scope for closer collaboration between police forces in the future.

Further to the comments from the Chief Constable, collaboration in Wales is a priority and we meet frequently to discuss and progress potential areas. We also have a Police Liaison Unit embedded in the Welsh Government as well as the Policing Partnership Board for Wales which is chaired by the First Minister and attended by the Secretary of State for Wales.

I welcome the inspection plans for next year and the decision for future inspections to balance both face-to-face and remote working. I also hope the responses I have provided to the inspection reports undertaken during 2020/2021 have helped to support the programme of work undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. I would welcome the publication of the inspection reports as soon as they are finalised as this will help me review them in a timely manner, giving them the time and attention they deserve with the work planned for my office being adapted as necessary to reflect any concerns raised in these reports.

Overall, I am pleased to see that forces are generally providing a good service to the public although there is always room to improve. I look forward to continuing to work with the Chief Constable and partners locally, across Wales and nationally to improve policing further for the public.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Cuthbert". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

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