

The Rt Hon Suella Braverman MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1P 4DF

23rd June 2023

Dear Home Secretary,

PEEL 2021/22: An inspection of Gwent Police

As required by statute, I am writing to you to respond to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection report entitled, 'PEEL 2021/22. Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy. An inspection of Gwent Police'.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome this report and the praise given to the way Gwent Police prevents crime and manages offenders. These are important areas that impact on our communities and help keep them safe. However, despite the many positives I am disappointed that it raises concerns with the force response to members of the public who call to report non-emergency incidents as well as stating that they also need to improve the way they investigate crime and protect vulnerable people.

Work has already begun to improve the areas highlighted in the report. We have already invested to improve our first point of contact services and have developed a brand-new state-of-the-art control centre at Gwent Police's headquarters.

I have spoken with the Chief Constable on numerous occasions about performance in these areas and I expect improvements to be made quickly. I know that Chief Constable Kelly is equally concerned by these findings and work to address the issues highlighted in the HMICFRS's report is already well under way as evidenced in the Chief Constable's comment below:

I am grateful to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services for their inspection report which examines our effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy.

I am pleased that the inspectorate has identified that the force is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and managing offenders and suspects. Furthermore, I am delighted that the Communities and Police Programme, alongside the role of next-generation community support officers and their innovative use of a video game to engage with young people about online safety, has been highlighted as innovative practice.

However, I acknowledge that in other areas, there are matters we need to improve upon. Led by the Deputy Chief Constable, the force is taking prompt and comprehensive action to address the concerns raised regarding how we respond to the public. Work is also underway to address the areas for improvement made in other areas within the report to ensure we provide the best service to the communities of Gwent.

While I understand the growing demand on services, and the huge amount of pressure this puts on officers and staff, clearly a lot more work is needed to address the areas of concern.

At my most recent Strategy and Performance Board (SPB) held on 7th June 2023, I focussed on the force's response to the areas identified for improvement in the PEEL report and have agreed that the Chief Constable will provide a report at each quarterly meeting highlighting the progress being made. These reports and the accompanying minutes will be published on my website to evidence the scrutiny that is taking place. The Chief Constable has also committed to sharing with my office the fast time improvement plans that have been developed as a result of the inspection to further improve our scrutiny.

I share below Gwent Police's response to the relevant recommendations within the inspection report, which detail the work underway to make the improvements called for by the inspectorate:

Responding to the Public

Within 3 months, Gwent Police should:

- **make sure a structured triage approach is used to assess risk and consider the needs of the victim;**
- **improve the process of risk assessing callers to identify those that are vulnerable or at risk;**
- **make sure that vulnerable and repeat callers are routinely identified, and that this is recorded; and**
- **make sure that call takers give appropriate advice on the preservation of evidence and crime prevention.**

The force has ensured it has moved at pace to address the concerns raised by HMICFRS in responding to the public and have drafted and executing plans that draw on expertise across the force to improve these areas. The force has implemented changes to systems, processes and training to meet the recommendations, outlined below:

Systems

Following Victim Services Assessment (VSA) feedback, THRIVE call scripts to support structured triage risk assessment, were mandated in October 2022. Staff are required to complete the scripts wherever they apply to the incident type to support them in gathering and recording all THRIVE information on the incident log. Reviews continue around the use of THRIVE to enhance the force's understanding and to provide a fuller picture of the incident, so the needs of the victim are ascertained. A Force Control Centre (FCC) resource is developing options as we learn from national best practice.

With regards to identifying vulnerable and repeat callers, the call scripts include Yes and No questions in relation to Vulnerability and Repeat factors, with free text fields for operators to record the contextual information. This information is provided to attending resources where relevant to the incident. The force is investing in a new command and control system which will further support this work by capturing contact records even when that demand does not result in an incident.

System changes have been implemented to show Yes/No answers to the repeat and vulnerable questions within the incident lists and thus can be simply reviewed by dispatch operators while

managing deployment and reassessing risk. The force continues to develop its operators to ensure this information is captured and appropriate support is given to victims.

Changes have also been introduced to Single Online Home to ensure this information is captured for electronic reports.

With regards to the preservation of evidence and crime scene investigation, through collaborative working with Joint Scientific Investigation Unit, amendments have been made to the call scripts to support staff in identifying opportunities and providing appropriate advice to callers. The FCC have also collaborated with Corporate Communications to create a webpage containing detailed crime scene preservation advice. The link to this webpage is now within STORM and staff can share the link as a text message in addition to providing the advice verbally on the contact. The 101 comfort messages have also been updated to include scene preservation and crime prevention advice.

Action has been taken to update call scripts with safeguarding advice following VSA feedback in October 2022. This ensures guidance is available to operators to provide consistent advice wherever it is relevant and supports them in endorsing the incident log to confirm what has been provided.

Processes

The force is exploring a range of ideas to improve management and triage of incident logs (excluding emergency grade) where logs are quality assured for THRIVE compliance prior to dispatch.

A revised process was established in March 2023 with regards to deployment and review of risk ownership and briefed to the force to improve management of outstanding demand and reassessment of risk. Through greater support of local Sergeants to own review of deployment and risk for outstanding lower grade incidents, it releases capacity for the FCC Dispatchers to deploy and reassess risk for emergency and priority incidents. This includes reviewing detail within the incident log and recontacting callers to obtain latest updates and manage expectations, whilst reassessing THRIVE based on the new information shared by the caller.

A VSA THRIVE quality assurance process led by the FCC was established in October 2022 to dip sample compliance with additional quality assurance support provided by an external consultant. This process incorporates review of call and incident log and involves either direct or tasked feedback to individuals involved to ensure positive performance is recognised and rewarded and action is taken where development is required. There have also been changes to the management structure in the FCC to ensure the drive for further quality assurance continues.

Performance data in respect of script compliance is now available at individual/team level within Qlikview to support the identification of trends and implementation of performance management where required.

Training and Briefing

Updates to current and new processes have been delivered to all staff through a combination of the following measures:

- Training day sessions in October/November 2022 and January to March 2023.
- FCC trainers have provided support through floorwalking with teams in order to discuss and enhance understanding.

- Senior management team have issued regular updates to staff via email, the intranet, floorwalking discussions and updates on the wall boards within the FCC. In addition, bespoke videos were completed and issued to all staff.
- Staff have been engaged in discussion around the HMICFRS recommendations and measures to overcome them since October 2022.
- Further to these direct messages to the staff, line management teams have received regular briefings from SMT and are tasked with dissemination of content to their staff.
- Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) resources and Public Protection Unit (PPU) resources have also supported through presence in the FCC to answer queries and support resources in dealing with calls involving CSI and vulnerability respectively.

Benchmarking

FCC senior managers have engaged with other forces and the College of Policing to understand best practice. The Head of the FCC attended a Masterclass in Greater Manchester Police and also has plans to visit another Welsh force. A benchmarking request has also been submitted to the force's Most Similar Group regarding staffing and demand processes.

Within six months, Gwent Police should:

- **make sure it can answer a greater proportion of non-emergency 101 calls so that caller attrition levels are reduced and kept as low as possible.**

Immediately prior to the Inspection the force had implemented a number of initiatives to support a reduction of caller attrition:

- Station Enquiry Officers providing additional resilience for 101 calls where demand allowed.
- Call-backs – An updated call back facility to ensure it was clear to callers they would retain their place in the queue, thus encouraging callers to utilise this facility as opposed to abandon.

The force has introduced the following additional measures in response to this recommendation:

- Switchboard - In February 2023, the force temporarily reintroduced a dedicated switchboard function which operates Monday to Friday 0900-1700. These resources solely deal with calls received via 101 option 7/838111 option 4 whereby the caller has self-identified they do not wish to report a new incident or request an update regarding an existing incident. This is having a positive impact on alleviating demand to 101 operators and thus assisting in reducing the attrition rate.
- Resource Utilisation - Business modelling plans have been reviewed and updated to best assure allocation of resources to meet demand, along with refreshed instructions to line managers in respect of duty allocation.
- Resource Modelling - The business case in relation to FCC resourcing requirement, continues to be explored to highlight the resourcing requirements to further reduce the attrition rates.
- Virtual response team are being trained in order to flex into FCC 101 call taking duties when demand dictates.

As of March 2023, the attrition rate is 27.2%, having dropped from 41.4% in October 2022.

- **attend most calls within its published time frames and update victims if there is a delay.**

All FCC resources have received refreshed guidance to ensure they are consistently delivering dispatch as follows:

- Identify and dispatch nearest appropriate resource
- Task Not Ask
- Resource activity checks i.e. check for ETA's and updates if at scene
- Inform dispatched resource of grade & target time.
- Escalate to supervisory resources asap where dispatch is delayed.
- Reassess risk and update callers
- Actively apply the Attempts at contact protocol wherever relevant.


The FCC has worked closely with Local Policing Area (LPA) resources to ensure officers are utilising their radio status codes to book off at scene as close to real time as possible and also complete their own updates and checks to alleviate demand to dispatch.

The force is developing its deployment strategy and is reviewing its placement of resources through the spatial mapping and performance teams. This is to ensure the nearest resource attends in a 'Task don't ask' process and to ensure the officers can realistically attend calls in its published timeframes.

I was also pleased to read that officers and staff understood the behaviours expected of them as employees of Gwent Police and that they knew how to report concerns relating to inappropriate behaviour. It is also extremely positive that officers and staff said they would be confident, when reporting this behaviour, of being supported by supervisors. Gwent Police have recently undertaken a lot of work in this area and I am confident they will continue to build on improvements in the culture of the organisation over the coming months.

To summarise, although there are large areas of good work in Gwent Police, I have made my expectations clear in relation to the areas for improvement and will be expecting regular updates from the Chief Constable and her chief officer team on each of these issues going forward. My team and I will be supporting and scrutinising Gwent Police to make these improvements as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely,



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