

**Swyddfa Comisiynydd yr Heddlu a Throseddau, Gwent**  
**Office of Police and Crime Commissioner, Gwent**

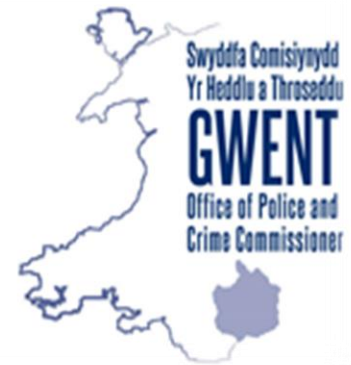
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Comisiynydd Heddlu a Throseddau Gwent | Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent:  
**Jeff Cuthbert B.Sc., MCIPD**



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

28<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Dear Home Secretary

**Policing in the pandemic - The Police response to the coronavirus pandemic during 2020**

As required by statute, I am writing to you to respond to the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection report entitled, 'Policing in the pandemic - The police response to the coronavirus pandemic during 2020'.

I welcome this report and the recognition it gives to the difficult role policing had to play during the pandemic. I would firstly like to praise the commitment of all officers and staff, especially those who put themselves at risk on the front line, during the pandemic. Many staff members also faced different challenges, such as working from home to support the frontline whilst undertaking schooling and caring responsibilities which I appreciate must have been very difficult. Yet despite this, I feel immensely proud that Gwent Police and the staff within my office continue to provide the best possible service to the people of Gwent. The leadership by the Chief Constable, Pam Kelly, and her chief officer team throughout has been excellent. I was pleased to see that this combined effort has been recognised in the report with a number of innovative ways of working developed in Gwent to ensure our most vulnerable residents continued to be our priority.

As stated by the Chief Constable in her comment below the constantly changing legislation made policing during the pandemic difficult but this was met with resilience and a desire to ensure the public were aware of the most recent rules before using enforcement as a last resort:

*'I welcome this report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services that examines how the police service responded to the Coronavirus pandemic.'*

*The pandemic presented unique challenges for policing and in response, Gwent Police took immediate and decisive action, building on strong links with partners to maintain service delivery. Our approach to applying the regulations was aligned to the National Police Chiefs' Council's*

*'4Es' model of engage, explain and encourage with enforcement elected only as a last resort. Our policing style and tone remained continuously under review to ensure we were acting proportionality and fairly to ensure trust amongst our communities.*

*The pandemic presented an opportunity to innovate and accelerate advancements in technology to enhance and improve the service we deliver to communities. I am pleased that good practice led by Gwent Police has been acknowledged by the inspectorate in their report. I am keen that Gwent Police is a progressive and learning organisation and we have placed a heavy emphasis on the importance of 'lessons learnt' throughout the pandemic.*

*I am immensely proud of all officers and staff at Gwent Police for the way in which they have met the many challenges presented by the pandemic. We remain cognisant at all times of the pandemic's impact on our workforce, both personally and professionally. I am passionate and committed to drive forward our Wellbeing agenda so that our officers and staff are fully supported, enabling them to deliver the best possible service to our communities.*

*My condolences are with all those that have lost their lives to the virus'.*

As well as technology providing the potential to improve policing, it also brings benefits to staff. The ability and flexibility to work from home and not have to travel long distances to meetings helps support work/life balance as well as encouraging people who may have not considered applying for roles previously and allowing staff to be more efficient. I will be interested to learn of the benefits this brings over the coming years.

Regular briefings have been received from the Chief Constable regarding the force's approach and response to the pandemic. As well as these being provided at private meetings, quarterly public reports have been provided to my Strategy and Performance Board (this is the meeting at which I hold the Chief Constable to account) as well as to the Joint Audit Committee. Updates have also been provided publicly to the Police and Crime Panel. My Chief Executive also attended the daily Covid Gold Meetings held by the force and was able to provide me with reassurance that the force was responding well to the pandemic in quick time.

I also include below an update on the relevant recommendations contained within the report:

**Recommendation 1: Managing Registered Sex Offenders**  
**Force must immediately make sure that officers understand and correctly implement the guidance for managing registered sex offenders during the pandemic.**

During the pandemic, the force continued to visit all Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs) who were medium risk or higher. Those categorised as low risk received telephone calls. Some agencies only conducted doorstep visits but as this would hinder a full assessment being undertaken, the force made the decision to still enter the homes of medium and above RSOs to allow a full assessment of the interior of the house as would normally occur. Full consideration was given to the pandemic and all safety measures were completed to prevent the inadvertent spread of the virus.

Medium and above graded RSOs make up around two thirds of all RSOs in Gwent. This approach resulted in 35 safeguarding referrals being made which resulted in 52 children being protected between January 2021 and March 2021.

As Covid restrictions have been eased the force has now returned to normal operating practices.

## **Recommendation 2: Legislation and guidance**

**Forces must immediately make sure they can manage their responses to changes in coronavirus-related legislation. They must ensure frontline officers and staff are clear about the differences between legislation and guidance.**

The force reviews legislation and guidance on a weekly basis at a force Gold Meeting attended by all Departments and informed by Legal Services. Briefings in the form of operational updates are provided by the communications department and guidance/legislation is clearly delineated on the intranet. The force Gold Commander reviews all legislation changes on a daily basis and makes appropriate decisions where required. These are disseminated through force and local Daily Management Meetings.

## **Recommendation 3: Test, track and trace**

**Forces must immediately put in place a policy to make sure that they follow the guidance and self-isolation directions when members of the workforce come into contact with someone with coronavirus symptoms.**

The force has invested in a Test, Track and Protect Hub which consists of 4 officers. It has a clear policy that staff need to follow self-isolation directions when they come into contact with someone with coronavirus symptoms. This policy and process is now embedded and all leaders within the organisation are aware of it and understand the requirements should a member of staff come in contact with someone with coronavirus symptoms.

This initiative has been particularly helpful in ensuring that staff and supervisors have the advice and support they need, the organisation can monitor absence carefully in order to manage resource and demand, and our workforce and communities stay safe.

## **Recommendation 4: Custody Records**

**Forces must immediately make sure that they clearly and consistently record on custody records information about how/when/if detainees are informed of the temporary changes to how they can exercise their rights to legal advice and representation. The record must make clear how any consents are obtained about the way in which legal advice and representation are provided.**

Changes were made as part of the response to the pandemic - the custody records are now updated to cover temporary changes to legal rights.

## **Recommendation 5: Overall scale and impact of changes**

**Within six months, forces must assess the sustainability of any temporary measures introduced during the pandemic that change the way they work. They must understand positive, negative and unintended consequences of the scale and impact of the changes before determining if any of these new ways of working should continue.**

The force has established a recovery group which will undertake this work.

As mentioned in my response to the inspection report 'Impact of the pandemic on the criminal justice system', one of the areas of concern has been the backlog of court cases. Excellent partnership working in Wales has resolved many of pandemic related issues but this still requires close attention and will be one of continued focus for both the Chief Constable and me.

I am immensely proud of the professionalism of all officers and staff throughout the pandemic. I will continue to support the Chief Constable to ensure wellbeing remains a priority and will do my utmost to ensure that she has the resources needed to help us focus on recovery from the pandemic. This has been a difficult time for us all but not more so than for those who have lost loved ones as a result of this virus, to everyone affected I pass on my sincere condolences.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Cuthbert', written in a cursive style.

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