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

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

3rd October 2023

Dear Home Secretary,

Race and Policing: A review of the police service's leadership and governance arrangements for race-related matters.

As required by statute, I am writing to you to respond to the inspection report from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) entitled, 'Race and policing: A review of the police service's leadership and governance arrangements for race-related matters'.

We recognise the significance of effective leadership and governance arrangements for race-related matters across policing. This is re-iterated by the Chief Constable in her comment below:

I welcome this inspection report from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services which examines the police service's leadership and governance arrangements for race-related matters. As the report highlights, in Wales, the Welsh Government has published the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and Criminal Justice Anti-Racism Action Plan for Wales. These plans provide further mechanisms to advance race equality which will assist the implementation of the Police Race Action Plan.

The Chief Constable and I are committed to ensuring that effective leadership and governance arrangements are in place for race-related matters in Gwent. I am represented at internal Gwent Police meetings that scrutinise associated matters, such as the Coercive Powers Scrutiny Meeting (focusing on stop and search and use of force), the Disparity in Police Custody Scrutiny Group, and the Legitimacy Meeting. This enables oversight of race-related issues, such as disproportionality and over-representation in policing processes, and how they are being addressed or explained.

For example, the Disparity in Police Custody Scrutiny Group, which includes community members, Independent Custody Visitors, and legal representation, reviews a range of custody data with a focus on disparity. The outcomes and findings from Group sessions are provided to the Gwent Police's internal Operational Performance Board and shared with Custody Strategic Management Group meetings to raise awareness of key issues or concerns.

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 gwahoddi gyfweiliad neu gyfarfod ac yr hoffech ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg, anfonwch e-bost at: Commissioner@gwent.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.police.uk. Translation services will be provided.

In addition, through my public-facing Strategy and Performance Board, I receive performance reports on public complaints, which includes matters of race discrimination or unfair treatment by officers due to a person's ethnic background. The reports are published on my website as part of my office's governance processes.

My office is engaged with Gwent Police's Independent Advisory Group which provides an opportunity to listen to and act on the feedback of those with lived experiences. Wherever possible, we will seek to involve members within our activities and, alongside Gwent Police, provide support to address any issues or challenges raised as part of this process.

My office coordinates and maintains long-standing arrangements for the independent scrutiny of police coercive powers, which has a focus on race disproportionality. Via the Legitimacy Scrutiny Panel, representatives from communities and agencies review a range of police data, including the quality of engagement with the public and recording of grounds for using coercive powers such as stop and search. Observations and feedback (including actions and recommendations) are fed into Gwent Police's Coercive Powers Scrutiny Meeting and quality improvement processes and published on my website. The revised Home Office Community Scrutiny Framework: National Guidance for Community Scrutiny Panels will be used by my office to benchmark and identify opportunities to enhance existing scrutiny processes and governance.

As previously noted, in September 2022, the Criminal Justice Board for Wales launched its Anti-Racism Action Plan. My office was instrumental in the development and production of the Plan, which will be a central component of our Strategic Equality Plan moving forward. Furthermore, my Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner leads on the Criminal Justice Anti-Racism Action Plan Community Engagement Workstream, which included the establishment of the Criminal Justice Independent Oversight and Advisory Panel for Wales. This Panel acts as a critical friend and challenger to criminal justice in Wales, helping to drive necessary improvements in the criminal justice experiences of people in ethnic minority communities.

Aligned to the Criminal Justice Anti-Racism Action Plan, there has been an investment in anti-racism training which has been delivered across the whole of Gwent Police and the OPCC. The OPCC is also participating in the latest phase of a Cultural Competency training pilot which is taking place across Wales.

The CJ Anti-Racism Action Plan has made race data a priority workstream. A Race Data Dashboard is being developed through the Wales Data Leads Group which will provide a range of criminal justice information. Taking a data informed approach requires confidence in the quality of information being collected, and part of the development work has involved reviewing and improving the quality of data being collected by agencies. The Race Data Dashboard will be used by each agency within their governance processes, by Local Criminal Justice Boards to enable better oversight and challenge of local criminal justice performance, and by the Criminal Justice Board for Wales to support any challenges or needs on a pan-Wales basis.

All of the above will be included within our new Strategic Equality Plans, due for publication next year.

As leaders, the Chief Constable and I recognise the need to have uncomfortable conversations to reinforce the importance of and work required to understand and recognise the experiences of our communities. Our staff networks are crucial to this, providing support and a safe space for officers and staff to talk about their experiences and concerns.

The networks at Gwent Police play a crucial role in challenging discrimination, promoting equality and inclusion, and driving culture change where it is needed. They are visible, viable voices within the organisation that enable people to speak up and be heard and I am fortunate enough to have been invited to meet with the networks personally.

Meeting with representatives from the Gwent Ethnic Minority Association allows me to develop greater insights into their work, their challenges, and successes, and to provide additional leadership support where needed.

I will now continue to work with the Chief Constable and partners to ensure that we remain focused on providing effective governance and leadership to advance race equality and address matters of systemic racism when they are identified.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eleri Thomas', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Eleri Thomas
Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent