

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

23rd December 2022

Dear Home Secretary,

An Inspection of Vetting, Misconduct, and Misogyny in the Police Service

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, 'An Inspection of Vetting, Misconduct and Misogyny in the Police Service'.

The murder of Sarah Everard was a watershed moment for policing in the United Kingdom. The tragic and shocking circumstances surrounding this case quite rightly brought about a time for reflection for all of us working in policing. The investigation revealed a litany of systemic failures, missed opportunities and a culture that would tolerate or turn a blind eye to attitudes and behaviours that have no place in the police. Unfortunately, we know that findings of this kind are not confined to isolated incidents or just one force alone.

As the inspection report shows, there are many areas in need of improvement if we are to root out issues pertaining to misogynistic and predatory behaviour by those working in policing. This applies also to tackling racism and homophobia and so we must have a robust system that can identify and dismiss those who display these unacceptable attitudes and behaviours.

The Chief Constable's comment on the inspection report emphasises this point:

'I welcome the findings of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection regarding vetting, counter-corruption capacity and capability and misogynistic and predatory behaviour in the police service.'

The report highlights significant issues regarding inadequate vetting processes, poor handling of misconduct cases and ineffective counter-corruption policies. The findings made by the inspectorate regarding misogynistic and predatory behaviour in policing are deeply concerning. It is completely unacceptable that female officers and staff continue to experience misogynistic and sexist behaviour from their male colleagues.

I acknowledge there is still much work to do in order to stamp out these attitudes and behaviours, which have no place in policing.

I am committed to implementing the recommendations made by the inspectorate to work towards rebuilding public trust and confidence in policing.'

In Gwent, we have recently been confronted with this issue and I am determined that we will rise to the challenge. I know that the Chief Constable shares my views on this and is equally

committed to ensuring that Gwent Police is a safe place to work and that there is no place for those who do not conduct themselves in the way expected of serving officers or police staff.

The unacceptable and often appalling actions of a minority of officers and staff tarnish the reputation of policing as a whole; they damage the morale and professional pride of commendable hardworking colleagues and erode public confidence in policing. It is therefore vitally important that we get a grip on this issue.

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:

➤ **Recommendation 1**

By 31 October 2023, the College of Policing should update its guidance on the minimum standard of pre-employment checks that forces must carry out before appointing an officer or member of staff. Every chief constable should make sure their force complies with the guidance. As a minimum, pre-employment checks should:

- **obtain and verify previous employment history for at least the previous five years (including dates of employment, roles carried out and reason for leaving); and**
- **verify the qualifications the applicant claims to have.**

The recruitment team currently check all references back three years for all new officers, staff and volunteers. This includes ex police officers that wish to return. We ensure there are no gaps in the last three years and if people have not been in employment, then educational and character references are sought. In light of this guidance, we have requested with immediate effect that Oleo (Wales E-recruitment system) is updated to request references back five years. We will implement this as soon as Oleo can be updated which should be within the next month.

In relation to checking of qualifications this is currently done in light of specifications on role profiles for roles where a specific qualification is required. This is checked and a copy is received prior to applicants commencing with Gwent Police. For police officer new starters all qualifications are checked with our higher education provider to ensure they are at the right standard for the appropriate route to policing. The force currently checks all police officer/Community Support Officer (CSO) role qualifications. For police staff we currently check specific qualifications for role – with immediate effect we will check highest level of qualification for all roles.

➤ **Recommendation 2**

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should establish and begin operation of a process to identify, within their vetting IT systems, vetting clearance records where:

- **applicants have committed criminal offences; and/or**
- **the record contains other types of concerning adverse information.**

Applicant data and adverse information is held on our vetting database and therefore it is easily available. Criminal conviction data for all staff and officers is also held on a separate Excel spreadsheet. Those with criminal convictions are added to the spreadsheet as and when vetting clearance is granted and therefore the spreadsheet is updated regularly. At present, adverse information is not recorded on the spreadsheet, however, this will be reviewed during January 2023 with the view to have this data added to the spreadsheet by July 2023. Once collated, adverse information will be reviewed with the Counter Corruption Unit (CCU) on a quarterly basis.

➤ Recommendation 3

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should take steps to make sure that, when granting vetting clearance to applicants with concerning adverse information about them:

- vetting units, counter-corruption units, professional standards departments, and HR departments (working together where necessary) create and implement effective risk mitigation strategies;
- these units have enough capacity and capability for this purpose;
- responsibilities for implementing specific elements of the risk mitigation strategy are clearly defined; and
- there is robust oversight.

Sharing of intelligence - if Notifiable Associations (NA) are identified during the vetting process, these findings and the applicant details are shared with the CCU for consideration to be given as to how any risks could be managed. Tactical advice from the CCU assists the Vetting Manager in making a final informed decision. If clearance is granted, a CCU Researcher marks these as 'potential joiners' in order to take steps to ensure that an NA form is completed when/if they go on to formally commence employment with Gwent Police. Any risk associated with the NA is then managed via the normal NA procedure, with conditions applied, or restrictions on geographical postings added where required. As with existing employees, the CCU will also deliver safeguarding briefings to inform individuals of wider risks where appropriate. Such conditions are then monitored and audited at intervals in line with the risk posed. Candidate 'tracking' and research into the persons involved is carried out by a CCU Researcher (the CCU have two which offers support and resilience). The CCU Detective Inspector and/or the Head of Professional Standards Department (PSD) will then scrutinise the research, assess the risk before either declining, approving the NA, or approving it with the application of conditions/risk mitigations.

➤ Recommendation 4

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should make sure that, when concerning adverse information has been identified during the vetting process, all vetting decisions (refusals, clearances and appeals) are supported with a sufficiently detailed written rationale that:

- follows the National Decision Model;
- includes the identification of all relevant risks; and
- takes full account of the relevant risk factors described in the Vetting Authorised Professional Practice.

The National Decision Model is used whilst making vetting decisions. Once risk factors are identified, the Vetting APP is referenced to assist with the decision making and to ensure compliance. Rationale is recorded briefly (some complex cases in more detail) either on the vetting database or a departmental trace sheet. Once the Vetting Supervisor is in post (this is likely to be January/February 2023), there will be capacity for the Vetting Lead to ensure that a detailed rationale is completed for all cases where there is adverse information.

➤ Recommendation 7

By 31 October 2023, chief constables should introduce an effective quality assurance process to review vetting decisions, including routine dip sampling of:

- rejections; and
- clearances where the vetting process revealed concerning adverse information.

Initial consideration suggests dip-sampling to take place on a quarterly basis. Core-Vet can be filtered so that any cases with adverse information and/or any rejections can be easily identified. A list of reference codes can be sent to the person completing the dip-sampling exercise so that cases can be selected anonymously and at random. We will be in a position to implement a quality assurance process by the end of January 2023.

➤ Recommendation 8

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should make sure they comply with the Vetting Authorised Professional Practice by analysing vetting data to identify, understand and respond to any disproportionality.

At present, only vetting applications being submitted through the HR platform OLEEO are analysed to monitor disproportionality with the vetting process. It is measured and shared with senior managers on a quarterly basis at the Chief Officer Team meeting. We are in the process of upgrading Core-Vet to the latest version and this will provide us with an opportunity to capture this data for all applicants to the force. Conversations are currently ongoing; the proposed implementation date is likely to be mid/late January 2023.

➤ Recommendation 11

By 30 April 2023, chief constables who have not already done so should establish and begin operation of a policy requiring that, at the conclusion of misconduct proceedings where an officer, special constable or member of staff has been issued with a written warning or a final written warning, or been reduced in rank, their vetting status is reviewed.

Vetting status is reviewed following a misconduct hearing and since October 2022 this has also been the case for those who have been subject to a misconduct meeting. The Hearing Officer has incorporated this into their process and will notify the vetting team of the outcome after each misconduct meeting. This is to ensure that the relevant action is taken in respect of vetting. Where issues are identified during the re-vetting process, the Force Vetting Lead will discuss with the Head of PSD to see if the individual can remain in their current post.

➤ Recommendation 13

By 31 October 2023, chief constables who have not already done so should establish and begin operation of a process to:

- identify the required vetting level for all posts within the force, including designated posts requiring management vetting; and
- determine the vetting status of all police officers and staff in designated posts.

As soon as possible after this, these chief constables should:

- **make sure that all designated postholders are vetted to the enhanced (management vetting) level using all the minimum checks listed in the Vetting Authorised Professional Practice; and**
- **give continued assurance that designated postholders always have the requisite level of vetting.**

Our list of current designated posts was reviewed early 2022. Following this review, we identified those in designated posts and checked to see if they held Management Vetting (MV). As some new posts were added to the list, forms were sent to those who were not currently vetted to MV. We have a process in place where the recruitment team will check what clearance is required each time there is an internal move. This helps us to capture those moving from a Recruitment Vetting (RV) post to an MV post. There are occasions where people move into posts without going through HR so we review this list every 6 months. A review conducted during November 2022 identified 15 people in designated posts without holding MV clearance. Forms have been sent out to these individuals and we await return. 98% of those in designated posts hold MV clearance. To ensure that all internal moves are accounted for, a process is now in place where the FIRMS system will notify the vetting team when someone moves into a new post. This helps to ensure that all internal moves are monitored and vetting statuses are reviewed accordingly.

➤ **Recommendation 15**

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should:

- **make sure that all police officers and staff are made aware of the requirement to report any changes to their personal circumstances;**
- **establish a process through which all parts of the organisation that need to know about reported changes, particularly the force vetting unit, are always made aware of them; and**
- **make sure that where a change of circumstances creates additional risks, these are fully documented and assessed. If necessary, additional risks should lead to a review of the individual's vetting status.**

Line managers are sent literature to share with their staff regarding the need to report changes of circumstances to the vetting department. This has also been recently referenced in PSD's newsletter - The PSD Times. To develop and make this a regular scrutiny process, Vetting and CCU are currently working together to create a PSD passport so that information regarding vetting levels/business interests and notifiable associations etc. follows someone through their service. Within this process, automated reminders will be regularly set so staff are aware of their requirement to report any changes to their personal circumstances. To develop this further, CCU have also begun discussing NAs and business interests within people intelligence meetings (which occur monthly) in order to raise awareness amongst line managers.

➤ **Recommendation 16**

By 31 December 2023, chief constables should make routine use of the Police National Database (PND) as a tool for revealing any unreported adverse information about officers and staff. To help this, the College of Policing should:

- **working with the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for counter-corruption, change the Counter-Corruption (Intelligence) APP to include a requirement for the PND to be used in this way; and**

- **change the PND Code of Practice (and any subsequent code of practice concerning the Law Enforcement Data System) to include a specific provision that allows for the PND to be used in this way.**

Gwent CCU routinely uses PND to prevent and detect corruption.

➤ **Recommendation 18**

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should make sure that there is a robust response to any criminal allegation made by one member of their force against another. This should include:

- **consistent recording of allegations;**
- **improved investigation standards; and**
- **sufficient support for victims and compliance with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales.**

From a conduct perspective, current plans ensure that should there be an allegation of Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse (PPDA) against a serving victim then a case handling meeting is held. Attendees are the investigating officer and supervisor, Domestic Abuse Safeguarding Team and PSD. A terms of reference is agreed between all parties with regard to an investigative strategy, support for the victim and sign posting to support agencies and frequency of investigative updates for all parties including the victim. Currently any allegation made against an officer or staff member will always be assessed as to whether it meets the criminal threshold and therefore will always be recorded as such. PSD have oversight of these investigations and following the conclusion of any criminal investigation which has been No Further Actioned, there will be an assessment of the evidence. This will be done to establish whether it meets the misconduct evidential threshold. On occasions further lines of enquiry have been identified which have been fed back to the criminal investigator to strengthen their enquiry. A business case has been agreed to fund an additional post into PSD to be responsible for victim and witness care. They will ensure that regular updates are received and that victims and witnesses are safeguarded and receive appropriate internal and external support.

The CCU consistently record intelligence utilising the CCU's standalone intelligence and case management system.

The unit is comprised of staff with the appropriate skills to investigate such allegations to a high quality - PIP2 Detectives who are ABE trained in order to appropriately support victims through their journey and Supervisors with appropriate CCU leadership and investigative training (PIP2 and through CoP). All PSD and CCU investigations are scrutinised by the Head of PSD at a monthly departmental scrutiny meeting.

➤ **Recommendation 20**

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should adopt the National Police Chiefs' Council sexual harassment policy.

The force is in the process of adopting the NPCCs Sexual Harassment Policy. It was reviewed and amended to align with Gwent Police processes. The policy then went out for a period of consultation which has been completed. It is currently with Chief Officers ready for formal approval.

➤ **Recommendation 24**

By 31 October 2023, chief constables should make sure their professional standards departments attach a prejudicial and improper behaviour flag to all newly recorded relevant cases.

Gwent will work with our software providers (who deliver PSD systems to a number of forces) to enable this change by the required deadline.

➤ **Recommendation 25**

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should make sure their professional standards departments and counter-corruption units routinely carry out all reasonable wider inquiries when dealing with reports of prejudicial and improper behaviour. These inquiries should ordinarily include (but not be limited to) sampling the following, in relation to the officer under investigation:

- **their use of IT systems;**
- **incidents they attended, and incidents they are otherwise connected to;**
- **their use of work mobile devices;**
- **their body-worn video recordings;**
- **radio location checks; and**
- **misconduct history.**

These tactics are consistently considered and delivered within proactive and reactive CCU investigations. Reviews by CCU supervisors and assessments prior to investigation closure ensure consistency and assurance that wider, but relevant lines of enquiry have been considered and developed by investigators. The use of tactics and proposed investigative direction is also discussed at the PSD departmental scrutiny meeting. Regular engagement with other CCUs and the CCU Analyst national forum also allows the sharing and gathering of best practice to ensure our tactics remain current, fit for purpose and proportionate. The department also uses 'Knowledge Hub' to learn from other forces.

➤ **Recommendation 26**

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should make sure their professional standards departments:

- **produce and follow an investigation plan, endorsed by a supervisor, for all misconduct investigations; and**
- **check all reasonable lines of inquiry in the investigation plan have been concluded before finalising the investigation.**

PSD are compliant with this recommendation with all PSD investigations reviewed on a monthly basis by the Conduct Detective Sergeant and Inspector. Investigative actions are raised and recorded which are documented on the investigation tab of Centurion. Additionally, the Conduct Detective Inspector will document investigative policy decision on Centurion. Investigations are scrutinised at a monthly departmental meeting chaired by the Head of PSD.

➤ Recommendation 28

By 30 April 2023, in the forces where we have not carried out fieldwork during this inspection, chief constables who have not already carried out a review of all allegations relating to prejudicial and improper behaviour, should do so. The review should be of cases from the last three years where the alleged perpetrator was a serving police officer or member of staff. The review should establish whether:

- **victims and witnesses were properly supported;**
- **all appropriate authority assessments, including assessments which didn't result in a complaint or misconduct investigation, were correct;**
- **investigations were comprehensive; and**
- **any necessary steps are taken to improve the quality of future investigations. These reviews will be subject to examination during our next round of inspections of professional standards departments.**

A review of all domestic abuse investigations over the last 18 months as the per the PPDA action plan has been completed. A review of prejudicial and improper behaviour investigations will be commissioned in the new year and will be completed by the deadline. Assurance processes will be introduced, for example, dip sampling and peer reviews of investigations by others within PSD (for example CCU reviewing investigations conducted by Overt PSD) and oversight at monthly departmental meeting chaired by the Head of PSD.

➤ Recommendation 29

With immediate effect, chief constables must make sure that forces use Regulation 13 of the Police Regulations 2003 for underperforming officers during their probationary period, rather than the Police (Performance) Regulations 2020.

This is entirely the case in Gwent Police. We have used Regulation 13 on a number of occasions in the past and continue to invoke the procedure where necessary. The Regulation 13 policy is being refreshed and will be put out for consultation in January 2023.

➤ Recommendation 32

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should make sure that:

- **all intelligence concerning possible sexual misconduct by officers or staff (including abuse of position for a sexual purpose and internal sexual misconduct) is subject to a risk assessment process, with action taken to minimise any risk identified; and**
- **rigorous additional oversight arrangements are in place to monitor the behaviour of officers subject to the risk assessment process, especially in cases assessed as high risk.**

A specific sexual misconduct risk assessment matrix is utilised by the CCU to score intelligence of this nature and subsequently to implement monitoring plans and risk management responses. The frequency of such monitoring is linked to the risk posed, with oversight and scrutiny by the CCU Detective Sergeant. This information is also fed into CCU's wider overarching risk assessment process which is reviewed on a quarterly basis.

➤ Recommendation 33

By 31 March 2023, chief constables should make sure that counter-corruption units (CCUs) have established relationships with external bodies that support vulnerable people who may be at risk of abuse of position for a sexual purpose, such as sex-worker support services, drug and alcohol and mental health charities. This is to:

- encourage the disclosure by such bodies, to the force's CCU, of corruption-related intelligence relating to the sexual abuse of vulnerable people by police officers and staff;
- help the staff from these bodies to understand the warning signs to look for; and
- make sure they are made aware of how such information should be disclosed to the CCU.

Abuse of Position for a Sexual Purpose presentations have been delivered to a wide range of partners covering 'spotting the signs' and how to report concerns. The new CCU Prevent Officer will take forward the development of more personal relationships within each agency and seek to hold regular people intelligence meetings as a result. Such interactions will continue to be recorded on a tracker which the Prevent Officer will develop to plan and record meetings. The CCU Detective Sergeant will continue to have responsibility for ensuring that sufficient coverage is being achieved across relevant partners with sufficient regularity and also to direct the Prevent Officer to areas of focus where necessary, for example following the receipt of specific intelligence.

➤ Recommendation 34

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should make sure that their counter-corruption units actively seek corruption-related intelligence as a matter of routine.

Gwent CCU operate a variety of proactive operations to seek out corrupt behaviours and are articulated within a Control Strategy and Delivery Plan, progress on which is reported to the Head of PSD during a monthly PSD scrutiny meeting.

➤ Recommendation 35

By 31 March 2023, to protect the information contained within their systems and help them to identify potentially corrupt officers and staff, chief constables should make sure that:

- their force has the ability to monitor all use of its IT systems; and
- the force uses this for counter-corruption purposes, to enhance its investigative and proactive intelligence gathering capabilities.

Gwent CCU has a fully embedded monitoring capability which is used both proactively and reactively.

➤ Recommendation 36

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should establish and begin operation of an improved system of mobile device management, with accurate record keeping concerning:

- the identity of the officer or staff member each device is allocated to; and
- what each device has been used for.

Gwent has a dedicated 'Devices Team' who manage this responsibility and have a close working relationship with the CCU. Their work involves continually reviewing and resolving numbers which

become unattributed or are moved between employees. Compliance currently stands at approximately 90%.

➤ **Recommendation 37**

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should:

- **convene, and hold on a regular and continuing basis, people intelligence meetings; or**
- **establish and begin operation of an alternative process to support the presentation and exchange of corruption-related intelligence, to identify officers and staff who may present a corruption risk.**

Gwent CCU operate several people intelligence initiatives, occurring monthly, including with operational colleagues, Learning and Development and Senior Managers. The soon to be implemented CCU Prevent Officer will also significantly expand the breadth of our people intelligence meetings.

➤ **Recommendation 38**

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should make sure that all corruption-related intelligence is categorised in accordance with the National Police Chiefs' Council counter-corruption categories (and any revised version of these).

The updated categories have been fully integrated into CCU's intelligence system and all intelligence has been categorised in accordance with these updated categories since 01.01.22. The CCU DS has default responsibility for assessment and categorisation to promote consistency.

➤ **Recommendation 39**

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should make sure they have a current counter-corruption strategic threat assessment, in accordance with the Counter-Corruption (Intelligence) Authorised Professional Practice.

This is fully embedded, with the 22/23 Strategy having just been published. This is Gwent CCU's fourth Strategic Threat Assessment and is written in accordance with Authorised Professional Practice.

➤ **Recommendation 40**

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should make sure their counter-corruption units:

- **produce and follow an investigation plan, endorsed by a supervisor, for all counter-corruption investigations; and**
- **check all reasonable lines of inquiry in the investigation plan have been concluded before finalising the investigation.**

Every item of CCU intelligence is assessed by the CCU DS. Those requiring investigation are subject of a bespoke investigation plan added by at minimum the CCU DS. Such assessments are scrutinised by the CCU Detective Inspector and during monthly PSD departmental scrutiny meetings. During more complex investigations the CCU Detective Inspector will assume the formal role of 'Senior Investigating Officer' and will also document a separate policy decision log.

➤ **Recommendation 41**

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should strengthen their business interest monitoring procedures to make sure that:

- **records are managed in accordance with policy and include cases where authorisation has been refused;**
- **the force actively monitors compliance with conditions that are attached to the approval, or where the application is refused;**
- **regular reviews of each approval are carried out; and**
- **all supervisors are properly briefed about business interests held by members of their teams.**

A comprehensive and up to date Business Interest policy is in place. Thorough research is conducted upon receipt of applications to identify internal and external risks. Prior to this the application also undergoes line manager and Head of Service Area approval. A CCU decision maker has responsibility for assessing and applying conditions to mitigate any risks (operational or reputational). The applicant is required to 'sign' to confirm acceptance of the conditions, BI's are then reviewed annually where this process is repeated and sooner for higher risk or declined applications.

➤ **Recommendation 42**

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should strengthen their notifiable association procedures to make sure that:

- **they are compliant with the Counter-Corruption (Prevention) Authorised Professional Practice (APP) and that the obligation to disclose all associations listed in the APP is explicit;**
- **there is an effective monitoring process to make sure that any conditions imposed are being complied with; and**
- **all supervisors are correctly briefed on the notifiable associations declared by members of their teams.**

A comprehensive and up to date Notifiable Association policy is in place which is compliant with APP. Thorough research is conducted upon receipt of applications to identify internal and external risks. A CCU decision maker has responsibility for assessing and applying conditions to mitigate any risks (operational or reputational). NAs are reviewed at intervals commensurate with the risk they pose. This will include conditions to ensure measures imposed are being adhered to. Supervisors are briefed on NA's during monthly people intelligence meetings and work has begun to improve automatic notification to individuals and supervisors through electronic systems e.g. force PDR system.

➤ **Recommendation 43**

By 30 April 2023, chief constables should make sure that a robust process is in place for completing annual integrity reviews for all officers and staff.

We have already built an integrity health check into PDR. We ask this question in Step 1 "Do you have any concerns regarding ethical behaviour?" For the launch of the 2023 PDR, we are proposing changing the structure of the question thereby placing an onus on managers to have this conversation with all staff. The development of the processes will be reviewed by our Ethics

Committees. Additionally, Vetting and CCU will be working together to progress a 'PSD passport' which will seek to automatically 'flag' to line managers that the individual has a NA, BI and additionally their current vetting level and expiry date.

To reinforce the point the Chief Constable made in her comment, there is much work that needs to be done in order to make the progress required and to tackle the issues highlighted in the inspection report. However, as Gwent Police's responses to the recommendations show, there is work underway and we do have foundations to build upon in order to improve. I will continue to work with and support the Chief Constable in bringing about the changes required and ensuring that the recommendations of the report are implemented.

Yours sincerely,



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