

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

Pencadlys Heddlu Gwent | Gwent Police Headquarters,
Croesyceiliog, Cwmbrân, NP44 2XJ

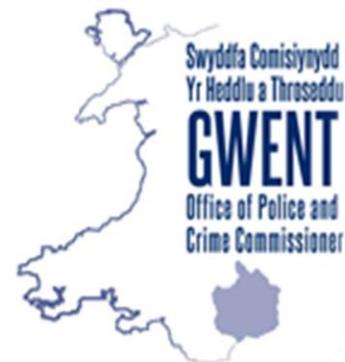
Ffôn | Tel: 01633 642 200

E-bost | Email: commissioner@gwent.pnn.police.uk

Gwe | Web: www.gwent.pcc.police.uk

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

2nd September 2020

Dear Home Secretary

Gwent - National Child Protection Inspection Post Inspection Review

As required by statute, I am writing to you to respond to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) 'National Child Protection Post Inspection Review' report for Gwent.

Protecting the most vulnerable in our communities is a priority, both for my office and for Gwent Police; this is evidenced by the focus within my Police and Crime Plan on protecting children and young people so I was particularly pleased that the overall findings from the re-inspection of Gwent Police found that a significant amount of work had been undertaken to improve safeguarding practices and outcomes for vulnerable children since the first inspection in February 2019. Whilst I am aware that this is an area where improvements are still required, I am confident that the Chief Constable, as mentioned in her statement below, will ensure that the recommendations from the original inspection, of which I understand 4 of the 8 have already been completed, will continue to be focused upon.

Our commitment to protecting some of the most vulnerable members of our community remains at the heart of our work and we appreciate that this assurance, and the actions we have taken to improve our work, is recognised by the inspectors. We are constantly working to improve the way we deliver safeguarding and to improve the outcomes for the individuals involved.

Having made good progress over the year between the initial inspection and the review, we understand that there is more to do and we continue to work with our partners to improve the consistency of our safeguarding for children and young people.

In her comment the Chief Constable indicates that partnership working will continue in this area. I support this approach and am pleased to report that partnership working between my office, Gwent Police and its partners is effective. We are always looking for innovative ways to improve the service we provide to the public and this can be evidenced from a recent project funded by my office and mentioned in your report, that involves a social worker being situated in the force control room in order to provide immediate support to officers who are dealing with the most vulnerable children in Gwent. As well as this project we have also successfully received money from the Home Office for tackling Serious and Organised Crime and the all Wales Serious Violence Prevention Project which I referenced in my letter to you dated 21st April 2020 in response to the National Child Protection inspection report.

I have also previously advised you of a project that my office had been leading, in partnership with Newport City Council and Gwent Police to examine the correlation between educational attainment and engagement in criminality and exploitation. A findings report has been drafted and a task and finish group established to set up a pilot project to test some of the findings and identify ways in which we can recognise issues and intervene earlier. It is hoped the project will be fully implemented by September 2020.

Even with the restrictions COVID 19 has placed on certain areas of work such as Operation Encompass, we have ensured that work that was to be implemented for the school summer holidays was brought forward; this information was then able to be used by schools in order to identify the vulnerable families and children in their school population. This gave them the best possible support in light of the potential issues they faced.

I acknowledge that there is still work to do in order to ensure we are listening to the viewpoint of the child in relation to safeguarding. My office is currently working with Gwent Police to implement a child centred policing approach to ensure the voice of the child is considered as part of investigations and other relevant police responses. We are also developing a joint child centred policing strategy which will ensure continued progress in the delivery of our services to children.

I welcome the finding that there has been an improvement in practice in relation to children detained in custody and I recognise the significant effort made by Gwent Police in this area which shows their commitment to protecting and supporting children. Both the Chief Constable and I continue to raise issues both regionally and on a national basis with the Welsh Government in relation to our concerns around secure accommodation for children.

The issue of missing children is one that is complex but that we must continue to work on in order to get right. I have noted that there is still improvement needed in this area and await the outcomes of the review into the missing children's team as well as the wider improvements currently being progressed in this area. We have, however, developed a multi-agency approach to integrated safeguarding hubs which is progressing well with partners.

Protecting children is one of the most important roles that the police service undertakes and I will continue to support the Chief Constable to ensure further progress is made against the recommendations identified by the inspectorate.

Yours sincerely



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