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Comisyynydd Heddlu a Throseddau Gwent | Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent: Jane Mudd

The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1P 4DF

14th November 2024

Dear Home Secretary,

Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements: Overview Report 2019-2024

As required by statute, I am writing to you to respond to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) report entitled, Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements: Overview Report 2019-2024.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome this report, which provides an opportunity to highlight the importance of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and the work we can all do to improve and share best practice. It was particularly encouraging to hear that partners across Wales have been highlighted for having committed and motivated professionals who demonstrate a good understanding of the nature of work in relation to children and families who are at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect and exploitation. I am confident this is the picture in Gwent.

By fostering strong relationships with the partners involved in our services across Gwent, we can ensure that all agencies maintain clear and consistent communication whilst also safeguarding and protecting the children and young people involved. My office and I are proactively involved in these partnerships, including my Deputy who represents me at the Regional Safeguarding Board, where the issues contained within the report will be taken forward. I also receive annual reports from Gwent Police on child protection and wider safeguarding arrangements, where I can take forward scrutiny from the findings within this report.

I feel reassured that partnership working is also a commitment for Gwent Police as reiterated by the comment put forth by the Chief Constable in his remarks below.

"I welcome this report from Care Inspectorate Wales, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales and Estyn, which outlines the thematic findings across joint inspections of child protection arrangements carried out between 2019 and 2024. The report highlights the strengths of partnership working and of each agency, as well as the areas for improvement. The findings of the report will be reviewed by the Gwent Safeguarding Board's Quality

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.

Assurance subgroup, alongside the findings of the Rapid review of child protection arrangements, published in September 2023, to monitor regional and organisational action.”

It is my commitment to ensure Gwent Police, my office and wider partners are heavily involved in multi-agency working, operating closely with partners to protect the most vulnerable in our communities. Examples include:

- A weekly 'missing meeting' has been developed for all five local authorities in Gwent, with representation from Gwent Police, Youth Offending Services (YOS), Education and St Giles. This forum identifies and seeks to develop a robust response to children who go missing whilst identifying the threat, risk and harm to reduce further risk of missing episodes.
- Any trends and themes identified in these meetings and across Gwent more generally are shared within the Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Team. These meetings are centred around putting young people at the heart of serious violence prevention and exploitation. In conjunction with partners, the MACE team offer strategic oversight to safeguard and mitigate risk vulnerable young people, their families, and the wider community.
- Agencies have worked together to develop a Child Exploitation Assessment tool. This is a tool that combines both child sexual and criminal exploitation factors. It provides opportunity for professionals to collaborate, share information, evaluate risk via the multi-agency group and develop plans to mitigate risk.
- In Newport, statutory and third sector providers, such as St Giles and Barnardo's, work to a shared ethos of safeguarding children and young people. My office funds diversionary preventative services to children who are at risk of criminal exploitation, including St Giles and a sport-based service called Positive Futures. These projects focus on diverting children and young people from serious organised crime, early intervention and provide practical and peer support to children who have been identified as being at risk.
- My office in conjunction with partners is involved in an ongoing piece of work known as *Understanding the Triggers*. This centers around working with vulnerable children and young people in Newport, highlighting missed opportunities for services to intervene with this cohort. The report will underline the key findings and offer any recommendations and considerations to better respond to children on the cusp of exclusion and exploitation (both criminal and sexual).
- I am pleased the positive impact Op Encompass has had in Gwent to effectively support the young people effected by domestic abuse incidents. I feel assured to know that improving Op Encompass is being taken forward at a strategic level, following a recent review, and has resulted in Barnardo's undertaking a piece of work to support schools with resources, knowledge and tool kits to better their support to children following the reporting of incidents. My Deputy and wider team have been actively involved in getting this work off the ground.

I am delighted to hear the positives that are happening across Wales. Nevertheless, we all acknowledge that there is still work to be done to gain further understanding of what it means to be needs led and trauma informed, ensuring that children and families have access to the support that they need in a timely manner. It is clear more needs to be done with the engagement from police officers with children, which was highlighted as not consistent across Wales. I am aware that a cultural shift is also needed to ensure that children and young people feel more able to speak about Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) incidents that take place within their home, to the trusted professionals around them.

I remain fully committed to ensuring that the voices of young people are heard and to actively engage with parents and families. My office and I consistently engage with children and young people through various community events. I will continue to prioritise this in the development of my Police and Crime Plan, as well as during the recruitment process for a new Chief Constable.

Overall, I am pleased with the efforts made in Gwent to improve our responses to vulnerable children. I am confident that we can continue our focus on these challenges to improve the safety and service for the communities of Gwent. I look forward to working closely with the new Chief Constable, partners

locally and across Wales to further enhance the quality of safeguarding procedures, protecting the most vulnerable children and young people.

Yours sincerely,

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

Jane Mudd
Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent