

Rt Hon Alun Michael JP OStJ FRSA

Comisiynydd yr Heddlu a Throseddu De Cymru
Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales



18 November 2019

Dear Home Secretary

POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER RESPONSE TO THE HMICFRS REPORT:
PEEL: Police Effectiveness, Efficiency & Legitimacy - South Wales Police

I am greatly encouraged by the fact that South Wales Police has been assessed as 'good' in all areas covered within this year's PEEL inspection. The report specifically highlights that South Wales Police is good at preventing crime and antisocial behaviour, that it investigates crime well and that it has a clear focus on identifying and protecting vulnerable people. The report makes clear that the force is good at using resources to meet demand and understands its demand well. Pleasingly the report has also found that the force upholds an ethical culture and promotes positive standards of professional behaviour, whilst senior leaders make sure that the workforce understands the need to treat the public and each other with fairness and respect.

I would like to address some specific points within the report.

First, I welcome the recognition that 'Prevention is at the core of the force's approach to reducing crime and keeping people safe'. This is certainly a finding I agree with, and it reflects the priority for 'prevention' that is clearly spelt out in my Police & Crime Plan. We are investing in a number of joint initiatives to prevent crime - our Joint Strategy to prevent violence against women and girls and the prevention of wider violent crime are just two examples where we are taking incremental steps year after year and therefore making a real difference. The report also refers to the Early Action Together work on Adverse Childhood Experiences, which we began here in our force and are now rolling out more widely across all four forces in Wales. The Chief Constable and I agree on prevention being a major commitment for South Wales Police, and I am encouraged to see that this is fully recognised by the Inspectorate.

I also welcome the report's assessment that 'South Wales Police is good at understanding and identifying vulnerability'. I have followed this journey since long before I became the Commissioner and in 2012 I was confident that the force's approach to vulnerability showed greater sympathy and understanding than I saw generally across Wales and England, so I am pleased with the way in which the force has built on those foundations in prioritising vulnerability and that the Chief

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Constable and his team are so firmly committed to this. In my own team I have a Strategic Lead for Vulnerability & Victims, who works positively in partnership with the force as well as local partners across our locality to be forward-thinking in this area.

The report acknowledges that 'South Wales Police is good at planning for the future', and through my Strategic Board I am continually monitoring ongoing force plans to improve our services, our workforce and our estate in line with our budget constraints. Thankfully the report acknowledges the financial challenges that lie ahead, which are significant.

I am pleased that the report has found 'South Wales Police treats both the public and its workforce fairly'. Recognition of the importance of working with communities is included in this finding as again this is something we have worked on together in recent years. There has been a very positive response to my request for a reassessment of neighbourhood policing and for a more developed understanding of the role and potential of the Police Community Support Officer to be conveyed both internally and externally. Community policing remains extremely important to me, and also to the Chief Constable, who is looking to further embed our new neighbourhood policing model that is fit for the future. Rather than being pursued in separate silos it is exciting to see the connection that has been made in practical terms between Early Action Together and the refreshed Neighbourhood Policing model in South Wales.

As part of my scrutiny role, I ensure that I and my team regularly review the use of stop and search and use of force, and it is pleasing to see that the report reflects the fact that these powers are used fairly and ethically by South Wales Police. My 'Police Accountability & Legitimacy Group', consists of external partner agencies who assist me and my team with holding the force to account. This group analyses stop search and use of force powers, and we welcome the recognition within the report that this external scrutiny is of value.

I am pleased that the report makes a number of references to the vigorous work within South Wales Police to improve its Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) representation. This work originated within my team, including the review referred to in the report. I have included the need to improve our BAME and female representation in each of my Police & Crime Plans since my appointment as initially there was little progress in these areas. We are determined to maintain the significant progress that has now been made, which is why I continue to invest resources into the ongoing work within the force to enable this to happen. We know that there is no room for complacency and while there has been such significant improvements in BAME numbers there is still a long way to go to achieve true representation of all our communities.

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The report contains no specific recommendations, although areas for improvement are outlined. I know that the Chief Constable will be committed to taking these forward and will welcome monitoring from me and my team. This is acknowledged in the Chief Constable's response to the report below:

'We welcome the results of the HMICFRS PEEL Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy 2018/19 Inspection in which South Wales Police were assessed as 'good' in all three areas. We will pay close attention to the findings to identify where improvements can be made in order that we continue to provide the best level of service to all of our communities. Progress will be monitored via the Chief Officer (Gold) Group and made available for scrutiny via the Commissioner's Strategic Board and its scrutiny function'.

As will be clear from the report, we take both operational leadership and scrutiny very seriously but we also work closely in co-operation to find ways of improving the service given to our communities across South Wales. By working together and with other agencies at a local level we make the most of the opportunities forwarded by the Well-Being of Future Generations Act and other positive aspects of the devolved environment in which we work.

In conclusion, I welcome this report, which I feel is a positive reflection of South Wales Police performance. I am very proud of the work and dedication of officers and staff in South Wales Police – including the members of my team and those whose contribution is voluntary through the Specials and the increasing contribution by our Police Youth Volunteers. I feel that this report reflects the reality of South Wales Police today and the hard work that goes into both meeting the ever-increasing demand for a response and the challenge of intervening early with prompt positive action to prevent harm and hurt.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Alun Michael
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