12 November 2021

**POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER RESPONSE TO THE HMICFRS REPORT:** **‘Policing Response to Violence Against Women and Girls’**

It should be noted that Covid-19 has indeed been hugely challenging, and continues to be so, not only for the people living in the South Wales area, but also for officers and staff working for South Wales Police. Notwithstanding these challenges, our officers and staff have continued to keep the public safe from harm, whilst quickly adapting to new ways of working. This area of work which is already significant has faced new challenges.

With the above in mind we fully endorse all the comments made in the report. Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) has been more of a focus within the Police force in South Wales and dedicated members of staff have now been employed to specifically tackle certain aspects.

The specific recommendations from the interim report in July have been commented on below: -

• There should be an immediate and unequivocal commitment that the response to VAWG offences is an absolute priority for government, policing, the criminal justice system, and public-sector partnerships. This needs to be supported at a minimum by a relentless focus on these crimes; mandated responsibilities; and sufficient funding so that all partner agencies can work effectively as part of a whole-system approach to reduce and prevent the harms these offences are causing. There needs to be an immediate upwards shift in the prioritisation of VAWG offences in policing.

The Police and Crime Commissioner’s team ensures that the force is adhering to all VAWG affected crimes. The team works collaboratively with the Strategic Public Protection Department, working on initiatives together, as well as training for police officers in order to raise awareness of all aspects of VAWG and the specialist support services available to support victims of such crimes.

Our joint ‘Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Strategy’ 2019-2024 clearly shows our priority thematic areas to focus on to ensure continuing support to those who are victims of VAWG offences.

We will include oversight of the use of VAWG outcomes 15 and 16 in our action plan going forward and research into this issue further.

To tackle VAWG and have the supportive mechanisms in place it needs to be a collaborative approach. The Police and Crime Commissioners’ team is working with the force, criminal justice partners and specialist agencies to ensure a whole systems approach is adapted. This will improve the results of those victims.

• The relentless pursuit and disruption of adult perpetrators should be a national priority for the police, and their capability and capacity to do this should be enhanced.

The South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner has fully funded the Drive high risk/high harm programme through the South Wales Force area. In addition the ‘Change That Lasts’ programme which incorporates CLEAR, a standard/medium risk perpetrator programme, has also been funded and piloted within certain areas. It looks to establish a whole systems approach to perpetrators throughout the force area using piloted regions for a full top up and top down approach to perpetrators as well as prevention programmes. The government’s Perpetrator Strategy should also enforce this further.

• Structures and funding should be put in place to make sure victims receive tailored and consistent support

We would endorse a National Policing Strategy. This would create more of a governance and structure moving forward in the world of VAWG.

There are 5 overarching recommendations within the main body of the HMICFRS final inspection report, which also incorporate the initial recommendations. These recommendations will be reviewed further and understood as to what is needed to be completed and added onto our Victim and Vulnerability portfolio plan. We will look to be involved with the work of the NPCC VAWG National Delivery lead and the framework that will be set by December 2021 to be able to assist in a response to the HMICFRS by June 2022. We will then be able to identify progress and what outstanding areas of improvement there may be.

The report is a useful assessment of the current issues affecting VAWG and a helpful reminder of the ongoing challenges that need to be addressed.



**Rt Hon Alun Michael**

**Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales**