SWYDDFA COMISIYNYDD HEDDLU A THROSEDD GOGLEDD CYMRU
OFFICE OF THE POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER NORTH WALES

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Ein Cyf/Our Ref: AD/ACH/2136

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Annwyl Ysgrifennydd Cartref,

Adolygiad o blismona cam-drin domestig yn ystod y pandemig

Yn unol â'r statud, ysgrifennaf atoch gyda fy sylwadau ar Adroddiad Arolygaeth Heddluoedd a Gwasanaethau Tân ac Achub adroddiad 'Adolygiad o blismona cam-drin domestig yn ystod y pandemig'

Fel y nodwch yn gywir, roedd angen i'r heddlu newid y ffordd roeddent yn ymchwilio trosedd yn ystod y pandemig. Roedd rhaid i swyddogion ystyried cadw pellter cymdeithasol wrth gynnal cyfweliadau gyda rhai o dan amheuaeth mewn ystafelloedd amgaeedig. Roedd angen gwisgo cyfarpar diogelu personol, ac roedd rhai heddluoedd yn defnyddio dulliau cyfathrebu gyda dioddefwyr o bell yn hytrach nag yn y cnawd. Ychwanegodd yr ystyriaethau hyn at yr anawsterau presennol mewn rheoli ymchwiliadau, fel magu hyder y dioddefwyr, eu cynorthwyo nhw drwy'r ymchwiliad a chasglu tystiolaeth i gynorthwyo erlyniad. Cafodd hyn effaith sylweddol ar holl ddioddefwyr trosedd ond yn enwedig y rhai hynny oedd yn dioddef trais domestig.

Ni ddylid tanbrisio effeithiau mesurau cyfyngiadau symud ar ddioddefwyr cam-drin domestig. Maent yn gymhleth ac yn amrywiol. Amlinellir llawer o'r anawsterau a wyneba dioddefwyr yn eich adroddiad.

Dear Home Secretary,

Review of policing domestic abuse during the pandemic

As required by statute, I am writing to you with my comments on Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Service Report 'Review of policing domestic abuse during the pandemic'.

As you rightly point out, during the pandemic the police needed to change the way in which they investigated crime. Officers had to consider social distancing when holding interviews with suspects in enclosed rooms, the wearing of personal protective equipment was required and some forces used methods of communicating with victims remotely rather than in person. These considerations added to the existing difficulties in managing investigations, such as gaining the confidence of the victim, supporting them through the investigation and collecting evidence to support a prosecution. This had a significant impact on all victims of crime but particularly those suffering domestic violence.

The effects of lockdown measures on victims of domestic abuse should not be underestimated and are complex and varied; many of the difficulties faced by victims are outlined in your report.

Glan y Don, Bae Colwyn LL29 8AW
Ffôn / Tel: 01492 805486
Ebost / Email: OPCC@nthwales.pnn.police.uk
Glan y Don, Colwyn Bay LL29 8AW
Ffacs / Fax: 01492 805489

Yn dilyn cyhoeddi cyfyngiadau symud gwnaeth Heddlu Gogledd Cymru gydnabod yn effaith ar ddioddefwyr yn syth a gweithredu i flaenoriaethu diogelwch dioddefwyr, gan estyn allan er mwyn sicrhau eu bod yn gwybod bod cymorth ar gael. Roedd hyn yn cynnwys defnyddio'r cyfryngau i dawelu meddwl dioddefwyr cam-drin domestig bod Heddlu Gogledd Cymru a'u partneriaid yn gweithredu fel arfer. Ar ben hyn, roedd dioddefwyr yn cael eu hadolygu'n wythnosol er mwyn sicrhau cyswllt gyda swyddog cam-drin domestig neu asiantaeth partneriaeth er mwyn rhoi sicrwydd a chymorth.

Following the announcement of lockdown North Wales Police immediately recognised the impact on victims and took steps to prioritise victim safety, reaching out to ensure they knew help and support was available. This included the use of media to reassure victims of domestic abuse that North Wales Police and partners were operating as normal. Furthermore repeat victims were proactively reviewed on a weekly basis to ensure contact with a domestic abuse officer or partner agency to provide reassurance and support.

Fel chi, mae gennyf bryderon difrifol o ran yr ôl-groniadau yn y llysoedd sydd wedi pentyrru yn ystod y pandemig a'u heffaith ar oroeswyr cam-drin domestig.

Like you, I have serious concerns regarding the backlogs in courts that have built up during the pandemic and their effect on survivors of domestic abuse.

Yn ffodus, fel y nodoch yn eich adroddiad **'Gwasanaethau dalfa mewn amgylchedd COVID-19'**, roedd trefniadau cydweithio da drwy gydol y System Cyfiawnder Troseddol yng Nghymru a chytunwyd ar gadw'r llysoedd ar agor yn gyflym. Tra mae rhai ôl-groniadau'n parhau, mae'n eglur ei fod yn llai sylweddol yng Nghymru nac yn Lloegr.

Fortunately, as you stated in your report **'Custody services in a COVID-19 environment'**, in Wales there were good joint working arrangements throughout the Criminal Justice System and an agreement to keep the courts open was made quickly. Whilst some backlogs remain, in Wales it is demonstrably less significant than in England.

Rydym hefyd yn parhau i roi'r cyfle i oroeswyr roi tystiolaeth o bell er mwyn gwadu'r trawma ychwanegol o fynd i'r llys yn y cnawd.

We also continue to offer survivors the opportunity to give evidence remotely to negate the additional trauma of attending court in person.

Mae cam-drin domestig yn flaenoriaeth i'r Heddlu ac mae hefyd yn flaenoriaeth i mi. Rwyf wedi ymroi i ddarparu cymorth i ddioddefwyr cam-drin domestig ac mae rhai o'r prosiectau rwyf yn eu hariannu wedi'u rhestru isod:

- Canolfan Atgyfeirio Ymosodiadau Rhywiol Mae'r prosiect hwn yn cynnal darpariaeth Gwasanaeth Eiriolwyr Trais Rhywiol Annibynnol gwell i oedolion, plant a phobl

Domestic abuse is a Force priority and is also my priority. I am committed to providing support for survivors of domestic abuse and some of the projects I fund are listed below:

- Sexual Assault Referral Centre. This project maintains the provision of an enhanced Independent Sexual Violence Advocate Service for adults and children and young people in north

ifanc yng ngogledd Cymru sy'n dioddef troseddau rhywiol.

- Mae'r Ganolfan Cymorth Trais a Cham-drin Rhywiol yn darparu gwybodaeth, cefnogaeth arbenigol a therapi i unrhyw un tair oed neu'n hyn sydd wedi profi unrhyw fath o gam-drin neu drais rhywiol.
- Gwasanaeth Cynghori Trais Domestig Rhanbarthol (IDVA) rhanbarthol. Mae Ymgynghorwyr yn gweithio i fynd i'r afael â diogelwch pobl sydd mewn perygl uchel o drais a cham-drin domestig gan eu cymar
- Uned Diogelwch Cam-drin Domestig. Mae'r Uned Diogelwch Cam-drin Domestig yn darparu ystod o wasanaethau o ansawdd uchel a chyfrinachol sy'n gwerthfawrogi a pharchu goroeswyr Cam-drin Domestig.

Mae'r gwasanaethau hyn yn cyflawni gwaith cynorthwyol ac ataliol achub a newid bywyd mewn ymateb i drais yn erbyn merched, gan gynnwys cam-drin domestig a thrais rhywiol. Rwyf hefyd yn ddiweddar wedi sicrhau £320,000 i gael ei rannu gan sawl sefydliad yng ngogledd Cymru sy'n cynorthwyo goroeswyr cam-drin domestig. Mae hyn yn cynnwys cyllid ar gyfer y prosiect 'IRIS', sef gwasanaeth atal arloesol sy'n cynnwys meddygfeydd meddygon teulu.

Rwyf yn croesawu'r cyllid ychwanegol gan y Weinyddiaeth Gyfiawnder er mwyn cynorthwyo ein holl wasanaethau cam-drin domestig. Gwerthfawrogais gael y cymorth hwn yn gyflym yn ystod y pandemig. Mae ein holl wasanaethau ar hyn o bryd yn gweithio hyd eithaf eu gallu ac mae derbyn £1.3m gan y Weinyddiaeth Gyfiawnder a'r Gronfa Cymorth Trais Rhywiol er mwyn rhoi cymhorthdal ar gyfer swyddi newydd wedi'i groesawu'n fawr gan bawb yng ngogledd Cymru.

Wales that are victims of sexual offences.

- The Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre provides information, specialist support and therapy to anyone aged three and over who has experienced any kind of sexual abuse or violence.
- A regional IDVA service. IDVAs work to address the safety of all people at high risk of domestic violence and abuse from intimate partners.
- Domestic Abuse Safety Unit. The Domestic Abuse Safety Unit provides a broad range of high quality, confidential services that value and respect survivors of Domestic Abuse.

These services deliver life-saving and life-changing support and preventative work in response to violence against women, including domestic abuse and sexual violence. I have also recently secured £320,000 to be shared by a number of north Wales organisations that support survivors of domestic abuse which includes funding for the ‘IRIS’ project, an innovative prevention service involving GP surgeries.

I welcome the additional funding from the Ministry of Justice to support all of our domestic abuse services and appreciated the immediate turnaround of this support during the pandemic. All of our services at this moment in time are working at full capacity and the recent award of £1.3m from the Ministry of Justice and the Rape Support Fund to subsidise new posts has been well received by all in north Wales.

Ein prif ffocws ydy atal cam-drin domestig, trais rhywiol a holl ffurfiau o drais yn erbyn merched a sicrhau gwasanaethau o ansawdd uchel i oroeswyr sy'n cael eu harwain gan anghenion, yn ymateb i rywedd ac yn gyfannol.

Our primary focus is to prevent domestic abuse, sexual violence and all forms of violence against women and ensure high quality services for survivors that are needs-led, gender responsive and holistic.

Hoffwn gymryd y cyfle hwn i grybwyll y Rhingyll Dros Dro Mike Taggart sef swyddog o Heddlu Gogledd Cymru sydd yn arweinydd strategol i ni o ran cam-drin domestig. Mae Mike wedi derbyn gwobr fewnol ac fe gafodd MBE yn ddiweddar hefyd am wasanaethau i ddioddefwyr cam-drin domestig yn anrhydeddau pen-blwydd y Frenhines. Rydym yn falch iawn o Mike, a'i gydweithwyr, a phopeth maent yn ei wneud i gynorthwyo dioddefwyr a chodi ymwybyddiaeth yng ngogledd Cymru.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention T/Sgt Mike Taggart a North Wales Police officer who is our strategic lead for domestic abuse. Mike has been the recipient of an internal award and was also recently awarded an MBE for services to victims of domestic abuse in the Queen’s birthday honours. We are very proud of Mike, and his colleagues, and everything they do to support victims and raise awareness in north Wales.

Yn olaf, rwyf wedi ystyried y tri argymhelliad yn eich adroddiad sydd wedi'i anelu at sicrhau bod heddluoedd yn parhau i ymateb i heriau plismona cam-drin domestig yn ystod pandemig COVID-19 a thu hwnt ac wedi ymateb.

Finally, I have considered the three recommendations in your report aimed at ensuring forces continue to respond to the challenges of policing domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond and have provided a response.

Argymhelliad 1

Rydym yn argymell os ydy heddluoedd yn parhau i fabwysiadu dulliau cyswllt ar-lein o ran dioddefwyr cam-drin domestig, dylent gyflwyno fframwaith goruchwylio a monitro effeithiol. Dylai'r fframwaith asesu addasrwydd dulliau cysylltu o'r fath, gan sicrhau bod anghenion dioddefwyr ar y blaen o ran penderfyniadau ynghylch eu defnyddio ac y cymerir camau priodol ymlaen ym mhob achos.

Nid yw Gogledd Cymru wedi mabwysiadu ymdriniaeth ar-lein tuag at gam-drin domestig. Os gwneir unrhyw gyswllt drwy Hafan Ar-lein Unigol neu Sgwrs Fyw yna cyfeirir hyn at weithredwr yn y Ganolfan Reoli a wnaiff greu achos ar gyfer ymchwiliad ac asesiad risg pellach. Dyrennir adnoddau yna'r adeg honno.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that if forces continue to adopt online contact methods in respect of victims of domestic abuse, they should immediately introduce an effective supervision and monitoring framework. The framework should assess the suitability of such contact methods, ensuring that victim needs are at the forefront of decisions around their use and appropriate onward action is taken in all cases.

North Wales have not adopted an online approach to domestic abuse; if any contact is made via Single Online Home or Live Chat then this is diverted to a Control Centre operator who will create an incident for further investigation and risk assessment. Resource allocation is then made at that point.

Rydym yn argymell bod heddluoedd yn adolygu eu defnydd o ymateb cychwynnol ar y ffôn i unrhyw achosion o gam-drin domestig a throseddau ar unwaith. Dylent sicrhau ei fod yn unol â'r ffiniau llym a amlinellwyd gan y Coleg Plismona.

Nid ydy Heddlu Gogledd Cymru wedi mabwysiadu ymdriniaeth gychwynnol dros y ffôn tuag at gam-drin domestig. Os gwneir unrhyw gyswllt drwy Hafan Ar-lein Unigol neu Sgwrs Fyw yna cyfeirir hyn at weithredwr yn y Ganolfan Reoli a wnaiff greu achos ar gyfer ymchwiliad ac asesiad risg pellach. Dyrennir adnoddau'r adeg hon.

Argymhelliad 2

Rydym yn argymell bod heddluoedd yn edrych ar eu gallu i ddarparu cymorth a diogelwch parhaus i ddioddefwyr cam-drin domestig y disgwylir eu hachos yn y llys ar unwaith. Dylai hyn:

Sicrhau bod digon o adnoddau ar gael er mwyn cadw cyswllt gyda dioddefwyr er mwyn eu diweddaru o ran cynnydd eu hachos; agalluogi cynnig mynediad at wasanaethau cymorth arbenigol ynghyd â chyfleoedd i ymdrin â phryderon sydd gan ddioddefwyr efallai o ran parhau i gynorthwyo erlyniad drwy'r oedi.

Mae Heddlu Gogledd Cymru yn galluogi gwasanaeth tystion dioddefwyr y llys a'r Ymgynghorydd Trais Domestig Annibynnol i gynorthwyo dioddefwyr sy'n disgwyl gwrandawiadau llys. Bydd y swyddog yn yr achos yn cynnal cyswllt yn unol gyda dymuniadau'r dioddefwr. Mae cymorth arbenigol ar gael drwy IDVA a'r darparwr gofal tystion er mwyn sicrhau bod y dioddefwyr yn cael cymorth llawn, a gallent ymdrin ag unrhyw bryderon.

We recommend that forces immediately review their use of a telephone-based initial response to any domestic abuse incidents and crimes and ensure that it is in accordance with the strict parameters set out by the College of Policing.

North Wales Police have not adopted a telephone based initial approach to domestic abuse. If any contact is made via Single Online Home or Live Chat then this is diverted to a Control Centre operator who will create an incident for further investigation and risk assessment. Resource allocation is made at this point.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that forces immediately review their capacity to provide ongoing support and safeguarding to victims of domestic abuse whose case is awaiting trial at court. This should:

Ensure there are sufficient resources available to maintain contact with victims to keep them up to date with the progress of their case; and enable the offer of access to specialist support services as well as opportunities to address concerns victims may have regarding continuing to support a prosecution through the delays.

North Wales Police enables the court victim witness service and the Independent Domestic Violence Adviser to support victims awaiting court hearings. The officer in the case will maintain contact in line with the victim's wishes. Specialist support is available through an IDVA and the witness care provider to ensure that the victim is fully supported and they can address any concerns.

Argymhelliad 3

Rydym yn argymell bod holl heddluoedd yn edrych ar eu defnydd o ganlyniad 15, canlyniad 16 ac erlyniadau a arweiniwyd gan dystiolaeth. Mae hyn er mwyn sicrhau:

y gwarantir yr edrychir ar holl ymgeision i ymgysylltu â dioddefwyr, a bod holl dystiolaeth bosibl yn cael ei hystyried fel y cyflawnir y canlyniadau gorau posibl i ddioddefwyr ym mhob achos; bod goruchwyliaeth reolaidd ac effeithiol o ymchwiliadau sy'n cynorthwyo cyflawni'r pwynt uchod; a bod y defnydd o ganlyniadau 15 ac 16 yn briodol, ac y cofnodir y rhesymau am eu defnyddio, gan gynnwys tystiolaeth archwiliadwy o ymgysylltu a dioddefwyr, yn glir.

Mae gan Heddlu Gogledd Cymru nifer o fforymau o fewn ei strwythur llywodraethu er mwyn craffu ar holl safonau ymchwilio. Mae'r Pwyllgor Safonau Ymchwiliadau, a gadeirir gan y Prif Gwnstabl Cynorthwyol, yn adolygu holl ganlyniadau troseddau a ymchwilir ac mae'n talu sylw penodol at y rhai hynny sy'n effeithio dioddefwyr bregus.

Mae gweithgor cam-drin domestig penodol yn awr yn cynnal darn o waith dyfnach er mwyn deall sut y gallwn wella ymchwiliadau a arweinir gan dystiolaeth, cyfyngu'r bwlch rhwng adroddiadau a chanlyniadau cyfiawnder troseddol a thaith gyffredinol y dioddefwr. Rydym hefyd angen deall pam fod dioddefwyr yn cilio rhag ymgysylltu, yr achosion a sut y gallwn wella'r gyfradd gadw a chynnig cymorth pellach i ddioddefwyr yn ystod ymchwiliadau.

Tra bydd effaith y pandemig yn cael ei deimlo gan ddioddefwyr cam-drin domestig a'u gwasanaethau cymorth am beth amser eto, mae'r Prif Gwnstabl a finnau'n parhau'n ymroddedig i wella canlyniadau ar gyfer y rhai hynny sy'n profi trais domestig. Mae'n holl annerbyniol ac ni fydd yn cael ei oddef o fewn gogledd Cymru.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that all forces immediately review their use of outcome 15, outcome 16 and evidence-led prosecutions. This is to ensure that:

Domestic abuse investigations guarantee all attempts to engage victims are explored, and that all possible lines of evidence are considered so that in all cases the best possible outcomes for victims are achieved; there is regular and effective supervision of investigations that supports the above point to be achieved; and the use of outcomes 15 and 16 is appropriate, and the reasons for using them, including auditable evidence of victim engagement, are clearly recorded.

North Wales Police has many forums within its governance structure to scrutinise all investigation standards. The Investigation Standards Group chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable reviews all outcomes for crimes investigated and pays specific attention to those affecting vulnerable victims.

A specific domestic abuse working group is now conducting a deeper piece of work to understand how we can improve evidence led investigations, narrow the gap between reports and criminal justice outcomes and the overall victim journey. We also need to understand the withdrawal of engagement from victims, the causes and how we can improve the retention rate and offer further support to victims during investigations.

Whilst the impact of the pandemic will be felt by victims of domestic abuse and their support services for some time to come, the Chief Constable and I remain committed to improving outcomes for those experiencing domestic violence - it is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated within north Wales.

Glan y Don, Bae Colwyn LL29 8AW
Ffôn / Tel: 01492 805486
Ebost / Email: OPCC@nthwales.pnn.police.uk
Glan y Don, Colwyn Bay LL29 8AW
Ffacs / Fax: 01492 805489

SWYDDFA COMISIYNYDD HEDDLU A THROSEDD GOGLEDD CYMRU

OFFICE OF THE POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER NORTH WALES

Yn Gwir/Yours Sincerely

Andy Dunbobbin

Comisiynydd Heddlu a Throsedd/ Police and Crime Commissioner

Glan y Don, Bae Colwyn LL29 8AW
Ffôn / Tel: **01492 805486**
Ebost / Email: **OPCC@nthwales.pnn.police.uk**
Glan y Don, Colwyn Bay LL29 8AW
Ffacs / Fax: **01492 805489**