

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Iechyd, Gofal Cymdeithasol
a Chwaraeon
Ymchwiliad i iechyd meddwl yng
nghyd-destun plismona a dalfa'r
heddlu
HSCS(5) MHP01
Ymateb gan Grŵp Partneriaeth Heddlu
De Cymru

National Assembly for Wales
Health, Social Care and Sport
Committee
Inquiry into Mental Health in Policing
and Police Custody

Evidence from South Wales Police
Partnership Group

Dear Sirs / Madam

In response to your request

Whether there are sufficient services (i.e. health and social care services) available to support police officers in Wales to divert people with mental health problems away from police custody.

I am aware that there is a lot of work being undertaken through the structure of the Crisis Care concordat. I am aware that many hours of police time is taken up with mental health issues and those in crises. Police officers have difficulty in getting hold of crisis teams for assessment and often face significant delays in having to stay with the person until they are assessed oftener because mental health professionals are busy, possibly due to undertaking a dual role of having to cover the wards as well as provide emergency work and maybe medics covering multiple sites.

1. The number of people arrested under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983, and the extent to which police custody is being used as a place of safety for people in mental health crisis.

This is now a rare event and when it happens is discussed at senior levels

2. Whether local authorities and health services are meeting their duties and complying fully with legislative requirements to provide appropriate places of safety to which the police may take people detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

As far as I am aware that places of safety have been identified and police do take individuals for assessment. However from stories told to me by families and patients the lack of beds impacts on the decision whether someone is admitted or not

3. Adherence to the Code of Practice to the Mental Health Act 1983 which requires that people detained under that Act should always be conveyed to hospital in the manner most likely to protect their dignity and privacy –

taking account of any risks (i.e. by ambulance which should be made available in a timely way, as opposed to police transport).

This is not happening and the vast majority of S.136;s are still being brought to place of safety by the Police. Resolution the transport issues is part of the Crisis Care Concordat and in South Wales Police are this is yet to be resolved, the matter lies with Greg Lloyd currently

4. How effectively police forces in Wales work with partners (such as health or social care services) to safeguard vulnerable people in police custody, and how well the police themselves identify and respond to vulnerable people detained in custody, specifically those arrested under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Through diversion and Triage service now in place in the South Wales Police Ops room information is much easier to obtain "live" to the officers on the beat at the time. However ease of communication is hampered significantly by the lack of electronic records which means hand written notes have to be found

5. The effectiveness of multi-agency care planning for people with mental health problems when leaving custody, specifically for those detained in police custody under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 to help to prevent repeat detentions.

I am concerned having done short audit of those presenting under section 136 over a month period n=41 that about 60% were already know to the MH services yet only 1 had a care and treatment pan. My suspicion that the majority of these case were personality disorder and substance misuse was proved - so it begs the question - is the Mental Health measure being targeted at those who need it the most?

6. Whether effective joint working arrangements are in place, with a specific focus on implementation of the Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat, including whether the Welsh Government is providing sufficient oversight and leadership.

There has been a lack of engagement from the NHS in the South Wales Police area. This has been escalated with significant support from the Welsh government which hopefully will bear fruit over the next year.

I hope this is of assistance

Regards

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Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist and Chair of South Wales Police Partnership Group
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board