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Date: 6th November 2013

Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Home Secretary,

As required within Section 55(5) of the Police Act 1996, I am required to comment on reports published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC).

I write in respect to the recently published findings of the thematic joint inspection conducted by HMIC, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, the Care Quality Commission, and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales entitled, "A Criminal Use of Police Cells?"

Within Dyfed-Powys we have significant concerns over the availability of mental health services available to our communities. We have access to five hospitals that offer mental health services within our four counties including Haverfordwest, Carmarthen, Llanelli, Brecon and Aberystwyth (which is planned for closure). This significantly impacts on the communities of mid Wales, and particularly those resident in mid and north Powys. This results in residents from these areas having to travel considerable distances to access services in Wrexham or Gwent.

Lack of mental health services available within our force area has a significant impact on policing services, particularly in respect of those persons detained by Police under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983. Police Officers have to travel considerable distances to escort those that have been detained on this basis. If beds are not available at the nearest health facility, police officers often escort the detainee to the next available facility as this is often the quicker option.

Welsh Government clearly has a role to play in ensuring that mental health services are sufficient to meet local need, and Mental Health and Criminal Justice Planning Groups will be critical to highlighting blockages of service provision and agreeing local solutions to overcome them. The Police can also provide valuable data to support the evaluation of service outcomes and can play a key role in future governance arrangements.

I will continue to raise my concerns over the availability of mental health services within Dyfed-Powys through my attendance at Local Service Boards and Area Planning Boards.

Within Dyfed-Powys we are currently exploring opportunities to pilot a mental health triage system which we hope will support individuals being diverted from police custody to a more appropriate support / care provision.

Additionally, I will continue to closely scrutinise force plans aimed at developing our approach to dealing with those that suffer from mental health to ensure that we learn from the effective working models identified within the review.

A copy of this response is published on my [website](#).

Christopher Salmon

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Police and Crime Commissioner

Cc: Drusilla Sharpling
HM Inspector of Constabulary
Wales and Western Region