

The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP
Home Secretary
House of Commons
London
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And via email
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Your Ref:	Our Ref: RP/CJ/SM	Date: 22 September 2016

Dear Home Secretary

RE: - SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE) AND THEIR FAMILIES

You will recall at Prime Minister's Questions in the House of Commons last week, the Telford MP Lucy Allan submitted a question on the subject of child sexual exploitation, to which Rt Hon Prime Minister Theresa May said in response:

"My honourable friend has just shown the cross party concern that there is on the issue of child abuse and child sexual exploitation. It is absolutely right, as she says, that we are able to look into the abuses and crimes in the past."

"We will need to learn important lessons from that as to why institutions that were supposed to protect children failed to do so."

"It is for the authorities in Telford to look specifically at how they wish to address those issues in Telford, but I am sure that my Right Honourable Friend the Home Secretary has heard my Honourable Friend's comments and that she will want to take that up with her."

We would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm that Telford & Wrekin Council and West Mercia Police are transparent organisations. The Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board operates in a very open way. We all welcome examination of the effectiveness of our services and remain absolutely committed to tackling this issue working alongside our national and local partners.

We have had three inquiries into this issue in 2016 and understand that the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse chaired by Professor Alexis Jay OBE will assess the extent to which we have learned lessons, implemented recommendations and put in place effective strategies to prevent child sexual exploitation in the future. The three reviews this year include:

- Telford & Wrekin Council's Children's Services were reviewed by seven independent Ofsted inspectors, who were based at the Council's Addenbrooke House headquarters for four weeks during June and July.
- The Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board has also been inspected by OFSTED and its work was rated as good.
- The Council carried out an independent all party scrutiny review over a period of 18 months, into how agencies work together to tackle child sexual exploitation.

The Ofsted report itself states:

"Work with children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation is very strong. The local authority has been a champion for tackling this issue. It provides leadership to partner agencies, with who this work is well co-ordinated. Work to protect children who go missing from home or care is thorough and improving.

"There is a strong commitment from the local authority and its partners to tackle child sexual exploitation... Consequently, young people receive comprehensive and well-coordinated services that make a positive difference."

Telford & Wrekin Council's Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee completed an in-depth review on CSE, during which the Committee heard from 19 victims and survivors of CSE, seven parents of those affected by CSE and met with over 50 children and young people. The Committee agreed to this review to ensure that lessons had been learned following the successful prosecution of nine defendants. They had been involved in the organised crime of child sexual exploitation locally, through Operation Chalice, and also the learning from other national reports and inquiries.

The Committee made 38 recommendations, most of which were directed at local organisations and the response to these recommendations has been agreed through Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board and Telford & Wrekin Council's Cabinet. A copy of the report and the partnership response has been attached for your information. The implementation of these recommendations will ensure that all local partners are continuing to work together to prevent CSE, support and protect victims and prosecute perpetrators. The Committee also made a number of recommendations relating to separate Government departments and will be writing to the Secretaries of State for Education, Communities and Local Government, Home and Health seeking their support with these recommendations.

Given the recent findings of Ofsted and the fact that the Government's own independent inquiry, chaired by Alexis Jay, is already committed to looking at what happened here in Telford, we do not feel at this time that a further inquiry is necessary.

We would like to be clear that we are under no illusions that there are significant concerns around the sexual exploitation of children in Telford. In towns and cities across the country it is clear that some of the most abhorrent offences are being committed against some of our most vulnerable members of our society.

We are not blind to this issue though. We are not sticking our heads in the sand or sweeping it under the carpet. Instead, we have acknowledged the problem and committed ourselves to taking action to address it. We are keen to emphasise that investigating these crimes and protecting children from harm remains a top priority locally for all the partners concerned.

We feel that good progress has been made in tackling this issue in Telford in recent years. That progress has been recognised by numerous official bodies and must be acknowledged. However it is clear there is no complacency.

We would also make the point that none of the victims of the crimes that were investigated by Operation Chalice were in local authority care at the point that the investigation commenced. It is correct to say that some of the victims were taken into care during the course of the investigation, but that was only for their own safety.

We would welcome your support in tackling this important issue and look forward to seeing the Government's response to recommendations made by the Council's Scrutiny Committee. We also acknowledge the role Lucy Allan has as the town's MP. We would be very happy to work with her to achieve the goals we all share around safeguarding young people and bringing offenders to justice.

To summarise, we remain committed to tackling this difficult issue in Telford and will support Professor Jay in any way that we can with the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse. It is vital that we all ensure that lessons have been learned and implemented, and that effective strategies are in place across the Country for preventing child sexual exploitation.

Yours sincerely



Richard Partington
Managing Director
Telford & Wrekin Council

Yours sincerely



Clive Jones
Director: Children's & Adult Services
(Statutory Director: Adult Social
Services)
Telford & Wrekin Council

Yours sincerely



Cllr Shaun Davies
Council Leader -Telford & Wrekin Council

Yours sincerely



Cllr Richard Overton
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member
for Housing, Leisure & Health/
Chair of the Health and Wellbeing
Board -Telford & Wrekin Council

Yours sincerely



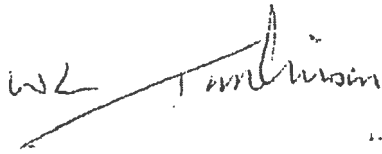
Cllr Paul Watling
Cabinet Member for Children, Young People
and Communities
Telford & Wrekin Council

Yours sincerely



Cllr Kevin Guy
Chair of the Children and Young
People Scrutiny Committee
Telford & Wrekin Council

Yours sincerely



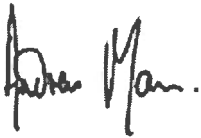
Clr Bill Tomlinson
**Leader of the Liberal Democrats
/Independent Group
Telford & Wrekin Council**

Yours sincerely



David Evans
**Chief Officer
Telford & Wrekin CCG**

Yours sincerely



Andrew Mason
**Chair of Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding
Children Board**

Yours sincerely



John Campion
West Mercia Police Crime Commissioner

Encs

CC via email

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