



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Lucy Allan MP
House of Commons
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Copied to:
Councillor Shaun Davies,
Leader of Telford and Wrekin Council
Mark Pritchard MP

Rishi Sunak MP
Minister for Local Government

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Dear Lucy,

Telford and Wrekin Council – tackling child sexual exploitation in Telford

Thank you for meeting me on 19 March to discuss the issue of child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Telford and the role of the Local Authority.

When we met, you outlined your concerns at the scale of the historic cases of CSE and your view that an independent inquiry initiated by Telford Council would be able to ascertain if there were any lessons to be learned from how these historic cases were handled; whether, for example, there were any issues of organisational culture which meant that the scale and significance of the problem was not picked up quickly enough.

In outlining your views, you recognised that there was good practice now in place at Telford and Wrekin Council, as evidenced for example in the 2016 Ofsted inspection of the Council's children's services which singled out the council's work in this area for praise.

Turning to your specific questions.

Firstly, you asked whether a Council-commissioned inquiry would necessarily not be seen as impartial or truly independent. The Ministry's view is that this is not the case. The experience of the Jay review in Rotherham shows that a review led by the right individual and given the right terms of reference can be genuinely independent, even when initiated by the Council itself.

Secondly, you asked whether this Ministry had any role in initiating such a Council-commissioned inquiry. It is for the local Council (in partnership with the range of agencies with shared responsibilities for delivering work to tackle CSE locally), not this Ministry, to decide whether to initiate a focused, specific and proportionate review of what has happened in Telford. Obviously, this Ministry would not block such an inquiry if this is what Telford Council decides to do.

Such a review would need to avoid having a negative impact on the work to protect children locally that the council is already undertaking. It would also need to recognise and not duplicate the important work that the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse is doing. The Council is the acknowledged expert on the local area and has a convener role with partners. It is best placed to judge exactly what benefits a new Council-commissioned inquiry would bring given the financial resources it has.

I note the Council's own call for an inquiry, and given the scale of this issue over many years, I am sure this is something the Council will and should consider. Indeed, I understand this specific matter may be discussed at an upcoming council meeting. Ultimately, however, it is for the Council itself to decide how best to proceed.

Thank you for discussing this important matter with me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rishi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

RISHI SUNAK MP