



John Campion
Police and Crime Commissioner
West Mercia
Hindlip Hall
Worcestershire
WR3 8SP

 Lee.carter@telford.gov.uk
 telford.gov.uk
 facebook.com /TelfordWrekin
 twitter.com /TelfordWrekin
 01952 380103

Sent by email:
john.campion@westmercia.police.uk
opcc@westmercia.pnn.police.uk

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Our ref: LC/klb

Dear John

Re: CSE Annual Report

I am writing to raise serious concerns, shared by both myself and colleagues, regarding the performance of West Mercia Police in responding to, and tackling, child sexual exploitation (CSE) within the Borough.

As you know, partners are required to produce an annual multi-agency report containing a range of datasets relating to CSE activity and outcomes. The data provided by West Mercia Police for the 2025/26 report raises a number of significant concerns regarding both investigative outcomes and organisational capacity.

In particular:

- Only **20 offences** and **11 offenders** were identified during 2025/26, relating to **64 children**;
- **No charges** have been brought against any offender;
- Of the 20 offences identified, in one case it was determined that prosecution was **not in the public interest**;
- In **eight offences**, no offender was identified;
- In **four cases** where suspects were identified, no further action was taken because the victim did not support prosecution. Given the nature of child sexual exploitation, where victims are frequently subject to coercion, intimidation, threats and violence, victim disengagement should be anticipated and robust evidence-led approaches are therefore particularly important;
- Despite the recommendations arising from the Casey Audit regarding the recording and scrutiny of ethnicity data, **ethnicity was not recorded** for more than **one-third of identified offenders**;
- Only **30% of West Mercia Police officers and staff** have received CSE training, despite this training having been commissioned more than two years ago.

In addition, I understand that due to recruitment and staffing challenges, the Child Exploitation Team based at Malinsgate has been operating at approximately **29% of its established capacity**.

Taken together, these figures raise legitimate questions about the effectiveness of current arrangements for identifying offenders, supporting victims, progressing investigations and building organisational capability in relation to CSE.

I also note that your office continues to undertake assurance and accountability meetings with the Chief Constable. From information published on your website, it appears that Child Sexual Exploitation was last the specific focus of one of these meetings in October 2024. Given the continued national focus on tackling child sexual exploitation and the concerns highlighted above, I would have expected more recent and visible scrutiny of this area.

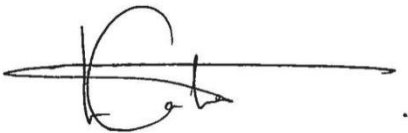
This position is not acceptable and risks undermining public confidence amongst our residents that vulnerable children are receiving the protection they need and perpetrators are being brought to justice.

I would therefore urge you to treat this matter as a priority and seek assurance from the Chief Constable regarding:

1. The reasons behind the low number of offences identified and the absence of charges;
2. The force's approach to pursuing evidence-led prosecutions where victims are unable or unwilling to support proceedings;
3. Plans to improve the recording and analysis of ethnicity data;
4. Current staffing levels and recruitment plans within specialist exploitation teams; and
5. Timescales for ensuring that all relevant officers and staff receive appropriate CSE training.

I would welcome your response and any assurances you are able to provide regarding the actions being taken to address these concerns.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Lee Carter', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Cllr Lee Carter
Leader - Telford & Wrekin Council