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Date: 15/07/2026

Dear John

RE: CSE Annual Report

Thank you for your letter of 14 July.

I am disappointed by the tone of your response. My letter raised specific concerns arising from the data provided for the CSE Annual Report provided by West Mercia Police. It did not seek to make a personal attack, nor did it seek to politicise the issue. It asked for assurance on matters which are plainly in the public interest.

Given the seriousness of child sexual exploitation, I do not believe it is unreasonable for the Leader of the Council to ask questions where annual reporting indicates that 64 children were linked to 20 identified offences, 11 offenders were identified, and no charges were brought. I also do not accept that raising these issues is somehow incompatible with constructive partnership working.

Effective partnership must include honest challenge, particularly where vulnerable children are concerned.

I note your comments regarding attendance at partnership meetings and the Police and Crime Panel. I recognise the importance of those forums, and the Council will continue to engage through appropriate channels. However, the existence of those forums does not remove my responsibility to raise legitimate concerns directly with you as Police and Crime Commissioner, particularly where the issues relate to police performance, public confidence and the accountability arrangements for West Mercia Police.

I also note your view that I do not have knowledge of individual investigations. That is precisely why my letter sought assurance rather than making conclusions about individual cases. The questions I raised concerned the overall pattern shown in the data, the recording of offender ethnicity, the capacity of specialist teams and the delivery of CSE training across the force.

I welcome your indication that the Chief Constable will write separately to clarify the operational points raised. I would be grateful if that response could specifically address:

- the reasons behind the low number of offences and offenders identified in the 2025/26 data;
- why no charges have been brought in the cases reported;
- how West Mercia Police is pursuing evidence-led prosecutions where victims are unable or unwilling to support proceedings;
- what action is being taken to improve the recording and analysis of ethnicity data;
- current staffing levels within specialist child exploitation teams serving Telford and Wrekin;
- the timetable for ensuring that all relevant officers and staff receive appropriate CSE training.

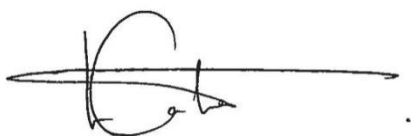
For the avoidance of doubt, I remain committed to constructive partnership working with your office, West Mercia Police, survivors, lived experience consultees and all relevant agencies. You will be aware of my involvement in the Councils response to this issue since 2016 and I trust that demonstrates my personal approach to making sure Telford & Wrekin remains the best equipped it can be to tackling this issue.

We have consistently taken a transparent approach to CSE reporting, and we will continue to do so. That includes recognising progress where it is made but also asking difficult questions where the evidence requires it. I do not believe that public confidence is strengthened by dismissing legitimate questions as political.

I therefore hope that future correspondence can focus on the genuine issues raised rather than personal criticism. CSE is far too serious for anything else.

If you feel the conversation would be better had in person then I am also happy to do that too.

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