



Home Office

Home Secretary

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Lucy Allan MP
House of Commons
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24 October 2016

Dear Lucy,

Thank you for your letter of 13 September requesting an independent public review into child sexual exploitation in Telford. I am sorry it has taken some time to reply. Your letter was of great concern and I wanted my officials to look into this issues you raised before responding.

Child sexual abuse is a despicable crime and I am clear that victims must be protected, abuse must be properly investigated and perpetrators brought to justice.

My officials have spoken to police leaders in Telford and to the Local Government Association who told them that local services acknowledge the scale of the problem and past failures in Telford. They also indicated that services are prioritising tackling child sexual exploitation and working together to address the issues. The Assistant Chief Constable, Amanda Blakeman, plans to meet the Director of Children's Services to discuss your concern about the rate of reported crimes and whether there is anything more they can and should be doing.

You were concerned about the response of the Council's Children's Services Department to child sexual exploitation. Ofsted are best placed to uncover issues and determine local performance. Telford and Wrekin Council was inspected by Ofsted in July and although overall children's services were judged to require improvement, they found that *"work with children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation is very strong... [and] well coordinated with partner agencies"*.

However, I remain concerned by the issues you have raised and I have asked Home Office officials to visit the Council and the local Police and Crime Commissioner to discuss the challenges they face and their plans to improve the response to child sexual exploitation. My officials will raise any concerns that they identify during the visit through the appropriate channels.

As you state in your letter it is crucial that public authorities take action to address failures to protect children from abuse and you will have seen the assurances that I have received from Telford and Wrekin Council and the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee which recently completed a review on child sexual exploitation. It is for the authorities in Telford to decide whether a further review is necessary.

There is a wide range of support available to services in Telford both through the Local Government Association, and the recently launched Child Sexual Exploitation Response Unit, backed by £1.24 million of Government funding. The Unit operates independently of Government and will ensure specialist support is made available to people working in children's safeguarding across the country, enabling them to develop and deliver a strong and robust first response to children and families who are victims of child sexual exploitation. You may wish to encourage the Council to seek support from the Response Unit who can be contacted on 0300 303 3032 or ru@nwgnetwork.org.

In their letters, the Council and the Committee have raised some additional points, most notably national funding to support victims and their families. I have copied you into my response.

As you know Councils are independent and therefore there are certain checks and balances that will need to be considered before Government can intervene formally. However, if you do have evidence that leadership failings are affecting service delivery or causing wider failure in the Council then please make the Department for Communities and Local Government aware of this. In the first instance, please contact Clare Clark / Nicola Golding at: LeadInspectionIntervention@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

Thank you again for taking the time to write on these important issues. I am aware that you have tabled a Westminster Hall debate on this matter in the House next week which Sarah Newton MP, the Minister responsible for safeguarding and vulnerability issues, will attend. Sarah would also be happy to meet to discuss further if you wish, either in advance of the debate or afterwards. Please contact her office on **0207 035 8904** to arrange a mutually convenient time.

The Conservative Councillors in Telford and Wrekin Council wrote to me on 7 October to support your request for an independent inquiry. I have copied this letter to them as it addresses the points that they raised. I have also copied this letter to the MP for Wrekin, Mark Pritchard, and to my Ministerial colleagues, Rt Hon Justine Greening MP, the Secretary of State for Education and Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

I hope this response helps to reassure you of the Government's commitment to supporting local areas to tackle these terrible crimes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amber Rudd'.

The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP