



Councillor Howard Sykes MBE
Room 338, Level 3, Civic Centre
West Street
Oldham
OL1 1UL

DECS Reference: MIN/0415749/22
Your Reference: HS/JS/4760

2 September 2022

Dear Councillor Sykes,

Thank you for your letter of 20 July to the Home Secretary about child sexual exploitation in Oldham. I am replying as the Minister for Safeguarding and I am sorry for the delay in responding to your letter.

I share your concerns over the shameful failures over child sexual exploitation in Oldham. As so shockingly detailed in the recent report, children were failed, time and again, by those who should have protected them, including Oldham Council and Greater Manchester Police. We are determined that this must never happen again. The Home Secretary has been consistently clear that this Government expects the police and local authorities to relentlessly pursue perpetrators and protect children from this disgusting crime.

In relation to your request that the Government institute a public inquiry into the findings of the Newsam and Ridgeway reports, the Government continues to be clear that it is for the local authorities in individual towns and cities, which are responsible for delivering local services, to commission local inquiries. It is essential that local areas learn from what happened in the past, and to take appropriate action to drive improvement in local services.

At a national level, the Government established the ongoing statutory inquiry (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse – IICSA) to investigate how effective institutions, including the police and local authorities, have been in protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

The Inquiry's final report setting out its overarching findings and recommendations to improve child protection and safeguarding in England and Wales is due to be published in autumn 2022. The Government will, of course, carefully consider the recommendations and take all necessary action to keep our children safe.

In addition, the Home Secretary recently commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to conduct a thematic inspection into the policing response to group-based child sexual exploitation. Unlike recent local inquiries into previous failures, this inspection will assess current practice, to ensure that

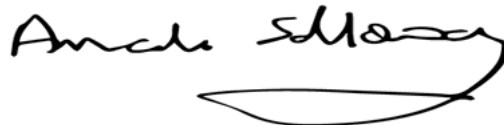
all police forces in England and Wales are learning from past mistakes and now deploying the most effective techniques in response to this most heinous crime. We expect its report later this year and will not hesitate to take further government action to improve the policing response to this terrible crime.

However, we are not waiting for recommendations from any inquiry to fulfil our commitment to tackle child sexual abuse. We are doing all we can now to combat this horrific crime. Our approach is underpinned by the Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy, published in January 2021, which sets out firm commitments to drive action across every part of government and across all agencies – education, health, social care, law enforcement, industry and civil society.

As the Oldham report highlighted, it is vital we continue to strengthen our multi-agency response to this crime. Across government we have formed a new Child Protection Ministerial group to ensure we grasp this opportunity to improve the lives of all children within the system. We have also introduced joint targeted inspections of local agencies' performance in protecting children and young people from threats such as child sexual exploitation, so that effective multi-agency working is recognised as the foundation for success.

We remain committed to confronting and combating this horrific crime wherever and whenever it occurs. We will use every lever available to us to keep children safe and provide support to victims and survivors to ensure they receive the support they need to help to rebuild their lives.

Thank you for taking the time to write to us on this important matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Solloway'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right and then loops back under the name.

Amanda Solloway MP