



Mr Harry Catherall
Chief Executive, Oldham Council
Level 3, Civic Centre
West Street
Oldham
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DECS Reference: MIN/0974265/23

15 September 2023

Dear Mr Catherall,

Thank you for your letter of 17 July 2023 to the Home Secretary relating to the findings of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse ('the Inquiry'). I am replying as the Minister for Safeguarding.

The Government remains firmly committed to tackling child sexual abuse and doing all that we can 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.

The Final Report of the Inquiry marked an important milestone in our collective efforts to tackle child sexual abuse. The Government published its response to the Inquiry's Final Report on 22 May 2023, accepting the need to act on all but one of the Inquiry's recommendations, demonstrating how seriously the Government takes the Inquiry's findings. Each of those recommendations covers an extensive programme of work which will deliver real change for the future.

At the heart of the Government's response lies our resolve to ensure the institutions of the present and future are not like those of the past, and to support victims and survivors. No crime is more horrific than the sexual exploitation and abuse of children, and the commitments we have made in the Government response aim to build on the UK's position as a world-leader in tackling child sexual abuse.

The Government response does not represent our final word on the Inquiry's findings, but rather the start of a new chapter. We have existing robust cross-Government governance structures to track effective delivery against the Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy. Under these existing mechanisms, we will continue to monitor progress of agreed recommendations across government, and with relevant partners, to ensure their effective implementation so we can best work together to remain responsive to this evolving threat, and uphold the needs of victims and survivors.

As you have referenced in your letter, local inquiries, including in Oldham, have exposed truly shocking cases of the most vulnerable in our society being abused by ruthless predators, and failed by those whose job it was to protect them.

The Government recognises the important role local inquiries play in improving our response to child sexual abuse and exploitation. I welcome the authorities in individual towns and cities, who are responsible for delivering services, to commission local inquiries to ensure that lessons are learnt and that local partners are doing all they can to improve their response.

To ensure lessons are being learnt from inquiries into historical practice, the Government also commissioned His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services to inspect current policing practice in response to group-based sexual exploitation of children, which is due to report later this year. In the meantime, the Government continues to drive national action to safeguard children and young people, disrupt offending, and bring perpetrators and those complicit to justice.

Thank you for your dedication to tackling these abhorrent crimes and keeping children and young people safe from all forms of abuse, both in Oldham and across the country.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sarah Dines". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot at the end.

Sarah Dines MP