



Home Office

Home Secretary

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

By email only

12 March 2025

Dear Ms. Kipling,

Thank you for writing to me on 14 February regarding next steps for Oldham's inquiry following the resolutions approved by your council on 13 February. This Government is committed to doing everything it can to tackle the horrific crimes of child sexual abuse and exploitation. This includes working closely with local areas to confront these terrible crimes, ensure perpetrators face the full force of the law, and provide vital support to victims and survivors.

As you will know, the Safeguarding Minister recently met with victims and survivors in Oldham to hear firsthand about their devastating experiences and their demands for justice and for change.

In that context, Oldham's decision to lead an independent local inquiry is commendable, and the Home Office stands ready to support the Council with this work as it progresses.

As we have seen in examples including Telford and Rotherham, effective local inquiries can provide detailed, context-specific insights and recommendations, driving real change at the local level. That is why the Government is developing a new framework for victim-centred, locally-led inquiries, informed by established best practice, tailored to meet the specific needs of communities. To support local areas in confronting this challenge, I have announced a dedicated fund to help strengthen local responses to child sexual exploitation - because at every level, getting justice for victims and protecting children is a responsibility we all share.

In recognition of your commitment and the local work and engagement already underway, the Home Office will make a direct award to Oldham Council to support this inquiry, contingent upon your support in identifying and adopting the best practice principles outlined in our developing framework. As with Telford and Rotherham, it would be up to your council to appoint an independent chair and panel to lead this inquiry, including development of its terms of reference. This will be important in sending a clear signal to victims and survivors, and their families, that Oldham is fully committed to a transparent and victim-centred local inquiry.

Simultaneously, the Government is drawing up a Duty of Candour as part of the long-awaited Hillsborough Law. We are committed to strengthening the accountability mechanisms that can support and follow up local inquiries, to ensure that those who are

complicit in cover-ups or who try to resist scrutiny are always robustly held to account, and that truth and justice are never denied. My officials would be happy to work with you – and policing and justice leads locally – to ensure shared understanding of our expectations around candour in advance of the inquiry getting started to ensure that you can get the answers you need. We look forward to setting out more detail on the duty in the coming weeks.

More broadly, since my statement on 16 January, the Home Office has been engaging closely with local authorities and relevant stakeholders on the design and delivery of the national fund to support locally-led work in this vital area. We have heard clearly that local authorities would benefit from support for a wider range of work to tackle group-based CSEA, including addressing historic issues, beyond establishing a full independent local inquiry. We are therefore developing a programme which can support both local authorities, like Oldham, who want to launch those types of inquiry and those who want to take on more bespoke work, including in areas where inquiries have already taken place, for example through the establishment of local victims' panels or conducting locally-led audits into the handling of historic cases. This will enable more areas to conduct meaningful work to deliver the truth, justice and accountability that victims and survivors deserve.

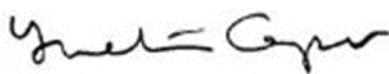
Finally, it is imperative that local leaders ensure that victims are fully aware of and can utilise the expanded right to review which will now cover all cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation no matter when they took place. Where investigations into allegations of child sexual offences have been closed with no further action, victims will be able to refer their cases to the independent Child Sexual Abuse Review Panel through a dedicated email at nationalpanel@npcc.police.uk, or bring their previous complaint back to the police forces or Crown Prosecutive Service. This initiative aims to ensure that all victims have the opportunity for their cases to be thoroughly reviewed so that the truth can be pursued and justice can be served.

As you will know, I have also appointed Baroness Louise Casey to lead a national audit of existing evidence on group-based CSE offending in order to gain a comprehensive national understanding of the scale, nature and characteristics of these crimes. That work is well underway and will report back in due course. The Terms of Reference have been published and a copy is attached.

Local leadership is crucial in driving meaningful change, and I would like to express my sincere thanks for your ongoing dedication to addressing these devastating crimes.

We look forward to working with you and setting out more detail in the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvette Cooper', is positioned above the printed name.

Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Home Secretary