



Home Office

Jess Phillips MP
Minister for Safeguarding and
Violence Against Women and Girls

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Mr Harry Catherall
Chief Executive, Oldham MBC
Level 3, Civic Centre
West Street
Oldham
OL1 1UG

DECS Reference: MIN/1229257/24

16 December 2024

Dear Mr Catherall,

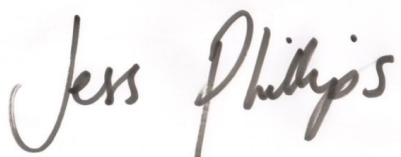
Thank you for your letter of 15 October to the Home Secretary requesting a meeting to discuss how Oldham Council and its partners can restore public confidence in its safeguarding services, in the light of past failures to protect children from child sexual exploitation. I am replying as the Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls, and I apologise for the delay in responding.

As mentioned in my previous response to you of 29 October (our ref: MIN/1205645/24), I understand your concerns regarding the limitations of Newsam and Ridgway's review into historic safeguarding practices in Oldham, particularly with regards to how victims and survivors were engaged. I have every sympathy for the victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation in Oldham who understandably feel let down by those who were meant to protect them, compounding the horrific abuse they experienced. And as you rightly state, it is important that we provide support and care to victims and survivors and aim to restore their confidence.

I fully support your endeavours to shape more effective safeguarding practices today, but unfortunately neither the Home Secretary nor I will be able to meet you at this juncture, due to the demands on our time. In any event, I would suggest that engagement with other areas that have commissioned successful local inquiries would be more helpful for you at this stage. They will be able to provide greater insight into the process than central government, which is necessarily at a greater remove. I would therefore encourage you to engage with Telford and Wrekin Council, for example, which commissioned the Telford Inquiry, delivered with victims and survivors at the forefront, to understand and learn from its experiences.

Thank you again for taking time to write to us on this important matter. I wish you every success in your pursuit of restoring public confidence in the services that Oldham Council is providing to safeguard and protect children.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Jess Phillips". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The name "Jess" is on the left and "Phillips" is on the right, connected by a fluid stroke. The signature is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Jess Phillips MP
Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls