



Department for Education

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Our ref: 2016-0046030

26 October 2016

Dear Councillor Watling

I am writing on behalf of the Secretary of State to thank you for your letter of 30 September about the finding of an in-depth review on child sexual exploitation.

I was pleased to read the council are committed to addressing problems and continuing to improve the response to child sexual exploitation locally. The Department for Education believes protection from all forms of abuse is a fundamental right for children and young people and tackling child sexual exploitation remains at the heart of the government's agenda. The 'Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation' report (March 2015) set out a national response to the failures we had seen in Rotherham, Rochdale, Oxfordshire and elsewhere. We continue this urgent work to support the way our police, social services, schools and other agencies work together to protect all vulnerable children.

We are fully aware of the importance of building children and young people's awareness and resilience so that they are best placed to respond to any threats they may face in their environment. To this end the government has run communications initiatives such as the Disrespect Nobody campaign and this focus remains central to our work as we continue to develop our national response to child sexual exploitation. We welcome Telford and Wrekin's action to engage children on these matters and to ensure that young people's voices are heard locally.

In schools the Department for Education wants to provide all young people with a curriculum that prepares them for modern life. High quality teaching of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is central to that and we expect all schools to teach it. Already the government has made a commitment to work with the PSHE Association to develop and promote guidance and resources for all schools to help them to teach young people to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse. We will also continue to keep the status of PSHE under careful review and work to identify further action we can take to ensure that all pupils receive high quality, age-appropriate PSHE and sex and relationship education (SRE). We believe that schools should also always seek to work in partnership with parents to deliver effective SRE. Schools should consult parents regularly about the content of their sex and relationship programmes.

The department agrees national support is needed to tackle child sexual at local level,

therefore we have established the Child Sexual Exploitation Response Unit, to provide specialist support to professionals working in safeguarding across the country. The Response Unit is being delivered independently by the sector-leading National Working Group Network, providing bespoke support including online resources, coaching for professionals and strategic support to implement strategies and recommendations. The Response Unit will also provide links to work soon to be expanded by the Local Government Association, offering peer-review of local authority responses to child sexual exploitation. This work was trialled successfully and further information is expected to be distributed to local areas shortly.

Where there is evidence of child sexual exploitation taking place, we must all feel confident that councils are facing up to the problem and have support available to them to prevent and stop it. You will be aware, in the context of a recent reply of 24 October from the Home Secretary to yourself and Mr Richard Partington of the government's position on calls for an independent review of child sexual exploitation in Telford. Officials in the department are working alongside officials in the Home Office and have also been in contact directly with the Director of Children's Services in Telford and Wrekin. Equally through the Inter-Ministerial Group on Child Sexual Abuse we are continuing to work together with ministerial colleagues to ensure that tackling child sexual exploitation remains a priority for the government.

I hope this information helpful and once again thank you for writing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D G', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Denise Clavery
Ministerial And Public Communications Division