



25 May 2018

Rt. Hon. Sajid Javid MP  
Home Secretary  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Our Ref: AG/GUES01001/01180267

Dear Home Secretary

We the undersigned are writing to you with regard to the Government's efforts to tackle child sexual exploitation, (CSE), especially in relation to that perpetrated by organised grooming gangs in Britain.

Firstly, please allow us to offer our congratulations on your new role. We are sure that your experience as Secretary of State for Local Government, and the commitment you showed to this crucial subject in that role, will serve you well in your new position.

As you are aware, the 2015 report; "Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation", detailed a number of measures the then government were to implement in order to improve statutory authorities ability to recognise CSE, to protect children and to bring offenders to justice.<sup>1</sup>

One of the principal measures outlined in the report was the categorisation of CSE as a national threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement '*so that this is prioritised in every police force.*' We would be grateful if you could please confirm that this categorisation remains in force.

The categorisation requires police forces to ensure that there are sufficient resources to tackle CSE, that there are robust plans to target offenders and that forces must work with each other to share resources, intelligence and best practice.

Whilst these requirements apply to police forces, we believe that their spirit should extend similar obligations to other government departments. With that in mind, we would be grateful for your comments on the following points.

### **Data Sharing on Children at Risk**

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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/408604/2903652\\_RotherhamResponse\\_acc2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408604/2903652_RotherhamResponse_acc2.pdf)

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In answer to a written Parliamentary question from Sarah Champion MP, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Vulnerability, Safeguarding and Countering Extremism, Victoria Atkins MP, stated:

*'Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect.'*<sup>2</sup>

Following the successful amendments to the Data Protection Bill (at committee stage), it is our view that further reassurance is needed to empower professionals who work with children to share personal data when they have reasonable grounds to believe that a child is a victim of sexual abuse and/or exploitation.

To that end, we ask that you consider working with the Information Commissioner to produce joint guidance which makes the case, and provides updates further to the passing of the Data Protection Bill, that such sharing of personal data is not just permitted but encouraged.

### **Proactive Prevention**

It is of course extremely difficult to confront criminal activity if the scale, nature and scope of that activity is not fully understood. Furthermore, it is not feasible for police forces acting in isolation to sufficiently comprehend activity that can involve extensive criminal networks and which may cross local, regional and even national borders. We therefore consider it incumbent upon the Government to, where appropriate, commission research in order to better understand the operation and motivations of such criminal networks in order to empower police forces to confront them.

Cases of gang related child sexual exploitation, such as those in Rotherham, Telford and in Newcastle conform to a precise model of recruitment, manipulation and exploitation. Despite these commonalities, we are not aware of any research being undertaken to understand the drivers for this kind of crime.

Sarah Champion MP previously raised this matter with the then Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Sarah Newton MP. In a response letter dated 28<sup>th</sup> September 2017, the Minister stated that research was being conducted by the Centre of Expertise for Child Sexual Abuse. However, whilst we understand the Centre for CSA is researching the typology of all types of child abuse, this specific form of abuse is not

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-29/135200/>



about sex, but degradation and exploitation with the victims being part of a bigger portfolio of criminal activity.

We believe the Government should commission research covering the specifics of gang grooming including the national networks in which this crime exists. We also believe such research must consider the 'end user', as well as those who initially recruit and exploit victims.

We would welcome any update you may be able to provide on research being conducted on the drivers for this specific form of crime and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Champion MP  
Member of Parliament for Rotherham

Lucy Allan MP  
Member of Parliament for Telford

Sir Kevin Barron MP  
Member of Parliament for Rother Valley

Lyn Brown MP  
Member of Parliament for West Ham

Alex Cunningham MP  
Member of Parliament for Stockton North

Philip Davies MP  
Member of Parliament for Shipley

Anneliese Dodds MP  
Member of Parliament for Oxford East

Darren Jones MP  
Member of Parliament for Bristol North West

Tony Lloyd MP  
Member of Parliament for Rochdale

Holly Lynch MP  
Member of Parliament for Halifax

Paul Maynard MP  
Member of Parliament for Blackpool  
North

Kerry McCarthy MP  
Member of Parliament for Bristol East

Andy McDonald MP  
Member of Parliament for Middlesbrough

Catherine McKinnell MP  
Member of Parliament for Newcastle upon Tyne  
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Layla Moran MP  
Member of Parliament for Oxford West  
and Abingdon

Naz Shah MP  
Member of Parliament for Bradford West

Anna Turley MP  
Member of Parliament for Redcar

Mark Pritchard MP  
Member of Parliament for The Wrekin

Barry Sheerman MP  
Member of Parliament for Huddersfield

Paul Williams MP  
Member of Parliament for Stockton South