



Ann Coffey MP

Member of Parliament for Stockport

House of Commons

London, SW1A 0AA

Date. 10th April 2019

Dear Ms Coffey MP

I write in response to your letter dated 1st March 2019. Can I firstly apologise for the delay in my response.

I am Detective Chief Inspector within Merseyside Police with responsibility for our Public Protection Unit and our Missing Persons Policy and have been requested to provide a response to your letter.

I have since read the response provided to you by Chief Constable Bailey which has been circulated for our information. I agree with all elements of the response from Chief Constable Bailey. Merseyside currently has a significantly high number of both regulated and non-regulated care homes and are seeing an increase in out of borough children placed in our area.

Please see below response to the five questions outlined in your letter.

- 1. Any observations you have on the particular difficulties experienced in safeguarding children who are placed out of borough from other local authorities?**

I concur with the comments made by Chief Constable Bailey in response to this question. It is common practice and normally the case that the first time Merseyside Police find out

about an out of borough child living in our area is when they are reported missing. This can obviously significantly impact on our response to locating and safeguarding the child.

In addition there are inconsistencies within Merseyside in providing independent return home interviews (IRHI) for out of borough looked after children. Independent return home interview data is very positive within Merseyside, however these inconsistencies result in often the most vulnerable children not receiving this crucial safeguarding and information sharing provision.

- 2. Do you think being placed out of borough, miles from home, increases a child's vulnerability to being targeted by those who wish to sexually exploit them or by gangs who want to criminally exploit them, for example in running County Lines. Can you provide any examples?**

I support the comments made by Chief Constable Bailey. I am currently not aware of any data or research within Merseyside to identify whether being placed out of borough increases a child's vulnerability or not. Merseyside Police Force Intelligence Bureau continually reviews our intelligence picture in relation to vulnerable children and there are examples of out of borough children in care being exploited. However, likewise there are examples of Merseyside children both in care and living with parents being sexually or criminally exploited.

- 3. What are the particular problems faced by young people aged 16 plus placed out of borough in accommodation not regulated by Ofsted. Do you have evidence that they are being targeted for criminal and/or sexually exploitation?**

I support the comments made by Chief Constable Bailey. Merseyside Police continues to work collaboratively with our partners in this area to better understand the issues and support those children living in non-regulated semi-independent care homes who go missing.

4. What observations do you have on “The national protocol on reducing unnecessary criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers’ released in November 2018.

I support the comments made by Chief Constable Bailey in relation to the document.

5. Please outline any other issues or concerns you have about out of borough placements and other risks.

I echo the comments of Chief Constable Bailey regarding the inconsistencies and risks to children due to lack of consultation and information sharing prior to placing a child in another Local Authority area. Merseyside, like other big Cities has a high number of Organised Crime Groups and is well known for exporting County Lines. This has to be taken into consideration when placing out of borough children into the area and the risk this may have on them. In addition another obvious risk is the capacity of the police to deal with the consistently high numbers reported on a daily basis together with the growing demand on police and partner agencies.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours Sincerely

Martin Earl
Detective Chief Inspector

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