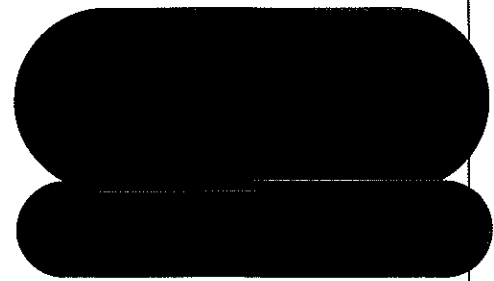


Received 4/12/17



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Cabinet Secretary for Justice
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

28 November 2017



I am writing to you to request an update on the progress of launching an independent inquiry into the claims of child sexual exploitation, in the Govanhill area [redacted]

Across the Parliament, we all recognise the seriousness of these allegations and we must do our utmost to get to the root of these claims as a matter of urgency.

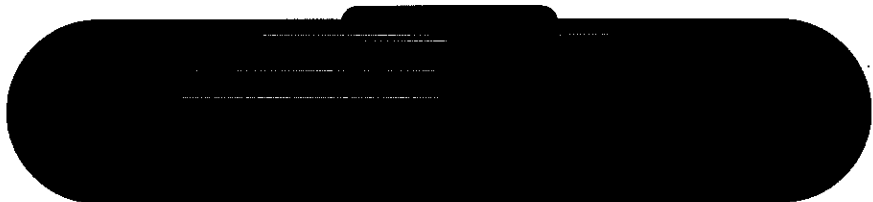
While I welcomed the comments made by yourself last week in the chamber that Police Scotland and Glasgow City Council are committed to thoroughly investigating these matters, I believe we can do more.

There are widespread concerns among local residents, [redacted] that many previous Police investigations have failed to discover any evidence of these claims, despite significant issues being raised by those that live there.

We have tragically seen in other areas of the United Kingdom in recent years, the awful circumstances that can occur when inaction occurs and we must act quickly when it comes to children and vulnerable people, [redacted]

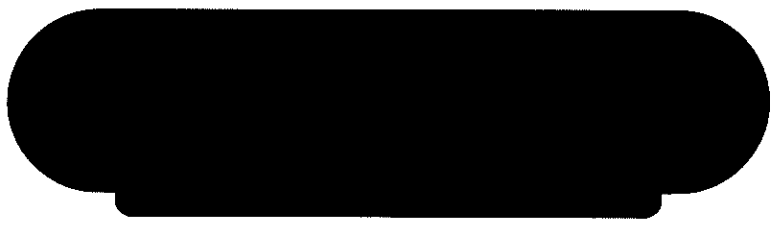
Only an independent inquiry can deliver the results which will alleviate the concerns of the local community, which have all too often been brought to the fore.

We must continue to support organisations in their quest to identify if any of these horrific allegations have any substance to them and that can be greatly helped by the setting up of an independent inquiry.



I hope you can outline to me as soon as possible what plans the Scottish Government have to heed the calls for an independent inquiry.

I look forward to your reply in due course.



Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Ceartais
Cabinet Secretary for Justice
Micheal Matheson BPA
Michael Matheson MSP



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[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

Ar faidhle/Our ref: 2017/0044413

January 2018

Thank you for your letter of 28 November requesting an independent enquiry into recent allegations in the media about the sexual exploitation of Roma children within Govanhill.

As previously stated the Scottish Government found the allegations reported deeply concerning. You will be aware that Police Scotland's National Child Abuse Investigation Unit and Greater Glasgow Division are currently carrying out a joint investigation into the allegations. The investigation is at an early stage and they are continuing to work closely with support services, advocacy services, statutory services and community groups.

Police Scotland is using their established community links to ensure that any information known by those who live, work or socialise in Govanhill can be shared.

I believe that this is the appropriate route to take. I would encourage [redacted] to contact the Police or Glasgow City Council's Children Social Work Services if they have information they could assist with the investigation.

Glasgow Child Protection Committee is alert to and has been proactive in taking forward work to tackle this form of abuse. This includes involvement in previous investigations within the City, community engagement work and increasing practitioner knowledge around CSE. Any concerns raised about a child as part of the investigation will be responded to within established child protection procedures of those statutory and voluntary services within the Committee.

Sexual abuse in any context is an abhorrent crime and will not be tolerated. Child sexual exploitation can affect any child or young person regardless of age, gender, race or area in which they live. As a Government we are taking action to tackle this form of abuse, set out in Scotland's National Action Plan to Prevent and Tackle Child Sexual Exploitation (2016).

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00497283.pdf>

Actions have been developed and agreed in collaboration with statutory, voluntary and third sector stakeholders. They reach across government portfolios, local authorities, police, health and the third sector, highlighting that we all have a duty to act in addressing this issue, including the role of the community in reporting concerns. Our aim is to ensure Scotland is a hostile place for perpetrators and facilitators of child sexual exploitation and to ensure that we are able to recognise and respond to the needs of those children and young people who may be at risk of or experiencing child sexual exploitation.

The implementation of the plan is being overseen by the National Child Sexual Exploitation Group. Membership of this group includes Police Scotland and representatives from Glasgow Children's Social Work services and third sector organisations operating in Glasgow.

MICHAEL MATHESON