



WEST MERCIA PCC: DISCLOSURE LOG RESPONSE TO REQUEST

Reference: 2018 – 164
Date of response 29th March 2018

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – INFORMATION REQUEST

Freedom of Information Request.

Dear FOI team,

I write with a request for information under the FOIA.

My request is as follows:

Please provide copies of all communications sent and received by the PCC between March 10, 2018, and today's date which relate to child sexual abuse in Telford.

Response.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your request for an internal review. The initial response was sent in error.

Please find enclosed copies of all communications sent and received by the PCC between the 10th and 15th March 2018 relating to child sexual abuse in Telford.

Where there are gaps, names have been redacted in accordance with section 40 Personal Information:

40 (1) Any information to which a request for information relates is exempt if it constitutes personal data of which the applicant is the data subject.

(2) Any information to which a request for information relates is also exempt if-

(a) it constitutes personal data which do not fall within subsection (1).

One document has been withheld under section 31 Law Enforcement:

31 (1) Information which is not exempt information by virtue of Section 30 is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice –

(a) the prevention of detection of crime

(b) the apprehension or prosecution of offenders

(c) the administration of justice

One other document has been withheld because it was a draft, under section 22 Information for future publication:

22 (1) Information is exempt information if –

- (a) the information is held by the Public Authority with a view to its publication, by the authority or any other person, at some future date (whether determined or not).
- (b) the information was already held with a view to publication at the time when the request for information was made, and
- (c) it is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information should be withheld from disclosure until the date referred to in paragraph (a).

The final version has been subsequently published and can be found in the enclosed communications.

Other communications that fall within your request are in the public domain and can be found using the following link <https://www.westmercia-pcc.gov.uk/further-pcc-statement-on-telford-child-sexual-exploitation/>

Yours sincerely,

FOI Officer

Complaints

If you think that the Police and Crime Commissioner has failed to supply information in accordance with the publication scheme, then you should write in the first instance, to the:

Chief Executive, OPCC – West Mercia, Hindlip Hall, Worcester. WR3 8SP

The PCC will aim to deal with your complaint within 10 working days. If you are dissatisfied with the response you can ask for the matter to be internally reviewed. Internal reviews will be completed promptly and a response given to you within 20 working days of your further request.

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EMAILS SENT AND RECEIVED BETWEEN THE 10TH AND 15TH MARCH 2018.

Received on the 12.03.18:

FYI – this is what Martin Evans has delivered to the media this evening.

From [West Mercia Police]
Sent: 12 March 2018 17:11
To: [Police and Crime Commissioner's office]
Subject: CSE Telford - 5.15 statement

Please find here the statement ACC Evans has given to the media this afternoon at 5.15pm - no new messages really, just needed some visibility in saying them.

Kind regards,

ACC Martin Evans of West Mercia Police said:

"Tackling CSE is, and has been for some time, the number one priority for police in Telford. We have specialist officers and resources in place tackling this type of offending, and we are committed to using our resources and technology to pursue anyone who sexually offends against children - whether that offending took place today, last week or years ago.

"The issue of offending against children has risen in profile as a result of a number of high profile cases, including Operation Chalice in 2013. Since that time, we have been continuously focused on this area, and work very closely with our communities to ensure that people know what to look for and have the confidence to report any issues they become aware of.

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"We also work very closely with health and local authority professionals as the Community Safety Partnership to ensure a co-ordinated response to these challenging issues.

"Our approach has been subject to independent scrutiny. Last year the Home Office spent time visiting the area and personally paid thanks to the commitment of our staff working to protect young people at risk from sexual exploitation. In 2016, Ofsted said that partners were working well to tackle this issue. Yet we are not complacent, and would welcome any further scrutiny of our work in this area and new ideas to help us tackle these crimes.

"We are aware of all the cases the Sunday Mirror newspaper has directly referenced. This information is not new to the police.

"It is really important to me that anyone who feels they are a victim of such crimes, or that they know someone who is, can come forward - knowing they will be taken seriously and will be looked after, and that we will go wherever the evidence takes us to investigate these crimes. If you don't want to speak to the police, you can also speak to a number of other agencies such as Childline on 0800 11 11 or the Say Something campaign on 116 000. Don't stay silent - say something, and we will act."

Received on the 13.03.18:

IGNORED by police and allowed to be GANG RAPED by Telford paedo gang again and again...

Yes your police do a marvellous job.

This email has been scanned by the Symantec Email Security.cloud service.
For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>

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Received on the 13.03.18:

From: [Police and Crime Commissioner's office]

Date: 13 March 2018 at 21:34:26

To: [Home Office]

Subject: Telford CSE Briefing

Dear _____,

It was good to talk to you earlier. As promised, I am emailing to provide a briefing on CSE events in Telford and the recent media coverage.

To reiterate, this remains a key priority for myself and West Mercia Police. Since my election in 2016 I have provided more resource to the police to protect the most vulnerable people, improved services for victims, commissioned evidence led projects to prevent child exploitation in our communities and formally held the Chief Constable to account numerous times. The details of these points are available on my website www.westmercia-pcc.gov.uk. There is a clear and unequivocal acknowledgement of this issue in Telford, as well as the wider West Mercia area.

- The most recent national coverage was first raised by a Sunday Mirror journalist on Friday morning. They presented West Mercia Police with an extensive list of detailed enquiries resulting from 18 months of research. They requested a response in time for Sunday's edition. The journalist was told it was impossible to provide such a detailed response in the timeframe provided.
- Both the force and I have engaged with a range of media outlets as the story has developed. Some media outlets have not given full or fair reflection of local positions or indeed the progress made on tackling this problem in Telford in recent years, which is widely acknowledged.
- The figure of 'up to 1,000 victims' is an estimate provided by a single academic. Spanning a period of almost 40 years, this equates to around 25 victims a year.
- West Mercia Police have provided repeated assurances that the information published by the Mirror is not new. The police are aware of each case, whether historic or current. This is perhaps best evidenced by comparing local media coverage with national coverage. Local outlets who are familiar with the issue have had limited interest and taken a much more measured, proportionate view.

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- In 2016 I was a co-signatory on a letter to the Home Secretary, stating that whilst I welcomed any constructive scrutiny, I did not believe an independent inquiry was necessary. This was due to recent service improvements and the existing national independent inquiry. In light of recent media coverage Telford & Wrekin Council has reversed its position on the matter. My personal opinion has not changed, however I would support any scrutiny that would help victims and reassure communities which the Government deems appropriate and necessary.

I attach recent media statements from myself and the police force for your information.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can help provide any further clarification on this matter.

Kind Regards

Internal email received on the 13.03.18

Hello,

Further to the Home Affairs Select Committee which was held today, please find below my notes from the meeting:

3.30pm witnesses:

- Dr Helen Beckett, Director, The International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking, University of Bedfordshire
- Cassandra Harrison, Director, Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse
- Elaine McConnell, CEO, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation
- Adam Pemberton, Corporate Director of Strategy & Performance, Barnardo's

Points covered:

- The Chair asked the group for their thoughts following the Telford coverage
 - Cassandra Harrison said that it is something that is very concerning to people, but that it happens across the whole country. She mentioned that police data, regarding number of CSE cases, has increased significantly but is limited as it only shows what is known to the police – there is so much more. This makes making decisions very difficult because they are 'being made in the fog'
 - Dr Helen Beckett said that we can't grasp the problem properly. What is happening is a deep concern, and she is yet to find an area that

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doesn't have a problem. She said that the media aren't helpful when they drive attention to one particular area as it makes it seem like CSE doesn't happen anywhere else or doesn't involve another group type. She has anxiety about children being let down because their area isn't highlighted

- Adam Pemberton said that the Telford failings need to be looked into
- Elaine McConnell said that the scale of abuse is enormous and identifying at which point police focus their attention becomes hard – be it historical, current or preventing it in the future
- Dr Helen Beckett explained that she goes out to various police forces to advise them on CSE
- The group then went on to discuss the future and how the majority of abuse is online – no new points raised

4pm witnesses:

- Chief Constable Simon Bailey, Lead for Child Protection, National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)
- Will Kerr, Director of Vulnerabilities, National Crime Agency (NCA)
- Chief Inspector Ronnie Egan, District Commander – Chelmsford and Maldon District Policing Area, Essex Police

Points covered:

- CC Simon Bailey (SB) said that CSE is having a significant impact on Norfolk Police, along with many other forces across the country. He said that technology is placing an even bigger threat, as it is giving people an array of opportunities. He believes that so much abuse is preventable
- The Chair, as with the previous group, raised the subject of Telford. SB said that he had had a conversation with CC Anthony Bangham and had been given a brief on Op Chalice and what is being done and what has been done. SB is aware that the media coverage isn't highlighting anything new. He also mentioned that he didn't find anything disproportionate in Telford compared to other areas. It certainly isn't the area of greatest risk and the model of abuse in Telford has been seen replicated in a number of areas
- SB said that he knows we're not capturing all that we can do around CSE
- He believes there is great victim confidence, but still not enough and that there are still children/young people out there who are too embarrassed about coming forward – which means they're really only seeing the tip of the iceberg. He highlighted the need to get children to understand the risks and dangers of engaging with people online, etc, but it also down to the tech companies. They can help prevent this from happening by doing something

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about the staggering amount of new images that appear online each month (a figure of 80,000-odd was mentioned), particularly when that number is still growing

- SB said that police forces can't just arrest their way out of the problem – there's so much more that needs to be done
- Will Kerr (WK) agreed regarding tech companies and said they should be doing more to protect young people. Introducing 'screening servers' – preventing images from being accessible and downloaded. He also mentioned a flag system working on browsers to highlight to parents, teachers, etc, when certain sites are being looked at by young people
- SB said that if it all this happened regarding the tech companies then it would free up forces to target the worst offenders who really hide and are extremely intelligent and tech savvy
- SB responded to a question about resources and whether or not they focus on historical or current abuse. He said that cases are going to court every week that the media don't know about. There are a range of cases and it's about getting the balance right. Forces are managing risk every day – in all areas
- WK said that the NCA get approximately 82,000 cases coming in to them. Roughly 2,000 cases are classed as 'informationals'. The NCA will refer cases to forces. SB said that they get approximately 1,000 referrals from the NCA. Norfolk Police has 35 outstanding cases, with two or three warrants taking place every week – the Chair asked for a flow diagram re cases and referrals to be shared to better understand it
- SB said there were, on average, 438 arrests per month – this is as a result of intelligence from the NCA and other referrals. This number was noted as being lower than arrests for other crimes – SB went on to explain the complexity around CSE cases
- SB said that he feels like he's letting victims down because of the criminal justice system – more needs to be done
- SB highlighted the number of those sent to prison versus receiving another form of sanction – 23% receive a custodial sentence, whereas 77% receive something like community service. He said that nothing is being done to rehabilitate
- It was mentioned again that we all need to be banging the drum about prevention, tech companies playing a much bigger part and more rehabilitation being offered/forced. SB commented on the number of offenders just not realising what they have done is wrong – they believe they're the victim. The system is also failing because the offenders aren't receiving a strong enough sentence

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Internal email received by the PCC on the 13.03.18

Hi all

MP Lucy Allen has just been interviewed on R4 Women's Hour, alongside a solicitor specialising in CSE. The interview is at the top of the programme but in summary: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09tyznx>

- Lucy opened by saying that CSE is problem up and down the country.
- She said that people have come to her directly to say this is still happening.
- She mentioned a social and cultural attitude towards young white girls, with the perception that they weren't always taken seriously.
- They featured the case study from 'Holly'
- She said that she would welcome a public enquiry, now, and that the national enquiry isn't the right approach- the solicitor agreed with this.
- They read the police statement.
- There was some discussion about the BBC being squeamish to cover this issue.
- There was some clarification that whilst those involved in the organised element of the crime have been Asian men, the actual perpetrators and the victims have been from various backgrounds.

Internal email received on the 13.03.18

Hi all

Here's an overview of the media coverage on CSE and various angles so far. I'll continue to update this, in the coming days.



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Internal email received on the 14.03.18

Hi all

Here's an updated overview of the media coverage, including some more of the coverage from yesterday and this morning.



From:
Sent: 13 March 2018 17:55
To:
Subject: Media Coverage so far

Hi all

Here's an overview of the media coverage on CSE and various angles so far. I'll continue to update this, in the coming days.

<< File: Telford CSE Media Coverage.doc >>

Response issued on the 14.03.18

Dear David,

Thank you for your email.

I believe the line you have included in your email has come from national media coverage, but please correct me if that is not the case – particularly if you need to report something.

I would like to reassure you that protecting the most vulnerable people in our communities is a top priority. I have included the two statements I have made regarding child sexual exploitation following the national coverage in the hope that this gives you confidence that I am holding the Chief Constable to account for the

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policing of this terrible crime. I also include a link to an article from the BBC with comments from the Superintendent for Telford - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-shropshire-43385515>

Best regards,

From:
Sent: 13 March 2018 16:24
To:
Subject:

IGNORED by police and allowed to be GANG RAPED by Telford paedo gang again and again...

Yes your police do a marvellous job.

This email has been scanned by the Symantec Email Security.cloud service.
For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>

Internal email received on the 14.03.18

Hi all

Here is a further update on coverage to date.



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Lucy Allan asked the following question in PMQs:

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- Like many towns and cities across the county, Telford has had some experiences of distressing cases of CSE. The authorities in Telford have now agreed to conduct an independent inquiry to find out what happened and to give victims answers. Will my Rt Hon friend join me in congratulating two brave women, campaigner Holly Archer and Sunday Mirror Journalist Geraldine McKelvie, for their work in bringing this about and will she do everything possible to ensure this enquiry starts without delay and leaves no stone unturned?

The PMs response was as follows:

I think we have all been shocked by the horrific case we have seen in Telford of some of the most vulnerable in our country being preyed upon by ruthless criminals. Sadly this is not the first example that we have seen, taking place across our country. I'm very happy to join my honourable friend in congratulating Holly and Geraldine for the work that they have done. This is not easy but it is right that they have brought this to light and that action can be taken. I'm pleased that the authorities are now going to conduct an enquiry, it is important that it begins its work to get to the truth and does this as quickly as possible. I understand that My hon friend will be meeting the Parliamentary undersecretary for crime, safeguarding and vulnerability to discuss this issue.

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