

An open letter to the people of Oldham

22 July 2022

To all Oldham residents:

Child Sexual Exploitation: Operation Sherwood

Dear Resident

You will know that, last month, an independent review was published into past child safeguarding practices in Oldham.

It was commissioned in 2019 following a request from the then Leader of the Council and the Local Safeguarding Children Board's Chair. I am very grateful to the independent reviewers, Malcolm Newsam and Gary Ridgway, for the thorough way in which they undertook their work.

The purpose of this letter is to make sure people in Oldham know what is being done to follow up on the findings of the report and secure justice for those victims who, to date, have been let down.

Greater Manchester Police (GMP) have now launched Operation Sherwood, an Oldham specific investigation into past child sexual exploitation in the borough with a dedicated team of police officers and support staff drawn from GMP's specialist CSE Unit. Chief Constable Stephen Watson has made a public commitment that any identified perpetrator, regardless of the passage of time, will be pursued relentlessly.

The Operation Sherwood team have already begun their work and will liaise closely with the Oldham policing district led by Chief Superintendent Chris Bowen, Oldham Council and other local stakeholders. As well as reviewing cases in the review, Operation Sherwood will also explore any further lines of enquiry which result from their investigations. No stone will be left unturned. Should any further victims be identified, the team will endeavour to explore these leads and pursue any potential criminal aspects which previously may not have been adequately investigated.

It is important that local people know that they are able to contact Operation Sherwood direct or, if they prefer, via one of the organisations supporting victims. Here are the various options:

- Operation Sherwood can be contacted on 0161 856 2124 between 7am and 3pm Monday to Friday, or at the e-mail address operationsherwood@gmp.police.uk.
- Oldham Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub can be contacted on 0161 770 1045 between 8.40am and 4.40pm Monday to Friday.
- St. Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) can be contacted on 0161 276 6525. You can ask them not to share any information with the police if preferred.

GMCA, Churchgate House, 56 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 6EU

BOLTON	MANCHESTER	ROCHDALE	STOCKPORT	TRAFFORD
BURY	OLDHAM	SALFORD	TAMESIDE	WIGAN

- Greater Manchester Victim Support Helpline can be contacted on 0161 200 1950 or visit their website at www.gmvictims.org.uk where you can get further information and request a call back.
- The Maggie Oliver Foundation is an organisation whose mission is to empower survivors of childhood sexual abuse and exploitation. The Foundation has provided support to some of the victims referred to in the assurance review. They can be contacted via e-mail help@themaggieoliverfoundation.com or through their website: <https://www.themaggieoliverfoundation.com/self-referral-form>

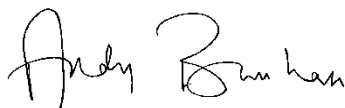
Greater Manchester Police has also launched a dedicated Operation Sherwood webpage <https://www.gmp.police.uk/police-forces/greater-manchester-police/areas/greater-manchester-force-content/au/about-us/operation-sherwood/>, which also contains these contact details and further information about the operation.

If you wish to report that you have been a victim of a more recent act of abuse, or believe someone else has or is at risk of CSE, please contact GMP via 101 or use the chat facility [Contact us | Greater Manchester Police \(gmp.police.uk\)](#) .

In addition, Oldham Council has launched its own victims' strategy, working alongside victim support, the sexual assault referral centre, mental health services and GMP. Part of this strategy will involve convening a victim support advisory group, led by survivors of CSE and chaired by local organisation Keeping Our Girls Safe (KOGS), to ensure the voices of these women shapes their work.

Finally, I want to assure you of how seriously we take these matters. With our support, GMP has invested £2.3m in the CSE Unit which has 106 dedicated officers. It is conducting several investigations into non-recent crimes not thoroughly investigated at the time and has achieved significant results. For example, several major investigations in Rochdale, including Operation Lytton, have led to charges against eight individuals covering 82 offences and a trial is set for May 2023. Operation Green Jacket, instituted after the first review in Manchester, has so far led to 21 individuals being arrested.

Operation Sherwood represents one crucial concrete step in facing up to the findings of the Oldham review. I will give my strong support to it and the pursuit of those who have committed the appalling crimes we have all heard about.



Andy Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester