

Child sex abuse victims let down by Bradford Council's CSE stance

A [good opinion editorial in the Yorkshire Post](#) following the representations of the three area MPs this week.

THE response of Bradford Council to damning criticism over his handling of CSE cases risks doing a disservice to victims of child sexual exploitation. In rejecting calls from Tory MPs Robbie Moore and Philip Davies for a Rotherham-style inquiry, the council says services are “stretched” and the priority is “front-line protection of children now”.

✘ Yet, while this work now comes under the auspices of Steve Walker after the Leeds City Council director was made Children’s Services Commissioner for Bradford, such a stance neglects the suffering of CSE and grooming victims that Ann Cryer, the then MP for Keighley, was highlighting over 20 years ago.

For clarity: Robbie Moore, MP for Keighley and Ilkley, has been calling on the council to set up an inquiry, similar to the one led by Professor Alexis Jay in Rotherham in 2014, and [during a debate on Tuesday evening](#) several Tory MPs backed his campaign.

Home Office Minister Rachel Maclean said councils are responsible for ordering local inquiries and they have a “moral responsibility to do the right thing” and protect innocent children. Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe, leader of Bradford Council, said a local inquiry is not necessary and the council is working to review and improve its response to the sexual exploitation of children.

Mr Moore said the “light and limited” review “reflects only the tip of the iceberg of what has been going on”, when he spoke during the debate in Parliament on Tuesday. He also said a “small minority of largely Pakistani Muslim men” have been abusing children in Bradford “for far too long” and “nothing has really changed” since his Labour predecessor Ann Cryer raised concerns about grooming gangs over 20 years ago. Conservatives Philip Davies, MP for Shipley, and Lee Anderson, MP for Ashfield, backed calls for an inquiry and accused the council and West Yorkshire mayor Tracy Brabin of failing to take decisive action.

The Yorkshire Post, a good regional newspaper I consult frequently, continues with opinion: Given the suffering that victims still endure, many of whom have suffered in silence for too long, Bradford needs to instigate its own ‘lessons learned’ inquiry. The benefits are significant – it will offer some solace to the abused, help the council shape future policies and, hopefully, give confidence to all victims of sexual violence to come forward.

However this will not occur if Bradford’s chief executive Kersten England and council leader Susan Hinchcliffe, two experienced individuals, do not respond more robustly to the very serious criticisms made against them in the Commons.

And, while it is for Bradford’s three Labour MPs to justify their non-participation, let them – and Bradford Council – be left in no doubt about the strength of Deputy Speaker Dame Eleanor Laing’s closing remarks: “That was a powerful debate. The whole House clearly wants action to occur now. It is not often that we are all in such agreement.”

So why won’t Bradford Council act? Why won’t the area’s Labour MPs encourage them to do so? I have my ideas.