

## **RISKY BUSINESS PROJECT**

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By Hand

Dear Chief Superintendent

**Re: Risky Business**

As you are aware, I am employed as a research and development officer on a one-year Home office funded pilot, based with the above project.

You will also be aware I have been working closely with Inspector Anita Mackenzie. With her I have been considering the effective use of legislation; training needs of police officers; and the effectiveness of policing methods to facilitate the prosecution of offenders. Although a great deal has been achieved, I still do not consider that enough has been done to protect children at risk and target their abusers. Resources in particular seem an issue of some contention. I have recently discussed this with Anita, and I believe she has relayed my concerns to you.

I have examined minutes of strategy meetings going back to 1999. I believe that my research shows that since 1999; the amount of children in Rotherham affected by this issue has significantly increased. It is clear that very little has moved since those first strategy meetings, in terms of the apprehension and prosecution of offenders. A stumbling block seems to be the allocation of resources, so this issue can be properly investigated and the children's inability to give evidence or make complaints against their abusers. This is something that also proved a stumbling block in the Wolverhampton and Nottingham pilots. They overcame these difficulties by looking at different policing methods: obtaining evidence from professionals, using medical evidence, undertaking surveillance and so on. As you will be aware this combined with appropriate legislation, particularly the Child Abduction Act resulted in a large number of significant convictions.

When I started in post I was made aware that the pilot had been developed through a period of consultation with services, including the police force. I therefore did not expect my work with the police to be quite so limited. The amount of information already provided to the police by professionals would, I believe, warrant an investigation into this matter. Furthermore, as part of my role, I have been visiting agencies, encouraging them to relay information to the police. Their responses have been identical – they have ceased passing on information as they perceive this to be a waste of time. Parents also have ceased to make missing person reports, a precursor to any child abduction investigation, as the police response is often so inappropriate.

This causes me a great deal of concern. Children are being left at risk and their abusers unapprehended. The working partnership that was intended by the government in Working Together to Safeguard Children, and Rotherham ACPC Child Protection Committee Guidelines will never develop so long as other services have this negative view of the police.

Additionally, the University of Luton on behalf of the Home Office evaluates my work. They share my concerns. I am attaching a copy of a letter I have received from them for your attention. They are also evaluating a project in Sheffield. They are conducting a direct comparison between Sheffield and Rotherham police. Although I am well aware that Rotherham police do not have the same resources available to them as Sheffield police, the question will remain – what has your district done to address this issue?

I know from Anita that you are committed to this issue. I have no desire to be part of a negative evaluation process. In the circumstances I feel it would be of mutual benefit if we could meet to consider ways forward. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

  
**Research and Development Officer for the Risky Business Project**



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