

Prohibition on the destruction of documents

The Statutory Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs is a statutory public inquiry established under the Inquiries Act 2005. The Inquiry is examining the sexual abuse and exploitation of children by grooming gangs across England and Wales during the period 1 January 1996 to 31 March 2029.

Anyone who holds information that could be relevant to the Inquiry must ensure that it is preserved and not destroyed. This requirement applies to both individuals and organisations. It also applies to information held on your behalf by someone else, such as an archive provider, contractor or service provider.

Relevant information includes anything that might help the Inquiry understand:

- what happened
- how people or organisations responded
- why the abuse was able to happen or continue
- how relevant systems, policies or ways of working operated

This includes things like correspondence, emails, recordings, documents, or data (whether audio, video, written (paper or electronic) graphic or other form) and includes confidential and / or sensitive material.

No potentially relevant information should be deleted, destroyed, altered or disposed of in any way.

Please note, section 35 of the Inquiries Act 2005 states, amongst other matters:

...

(2) A person is guilty of an offence if during the course of an inquiry he does anything that is intended to have the effect of—

- (a) distorting or otherwise altering any evidence, document or other thing that is given, produced or provided to the inquiry panel, or
- (b) preventing any evidence, document or other thing from being given, produced or provided to the inquiry panel,

or anything that he knows or believes is likely to have that effect.

(3) A person is guilty of an offence if during the course of an inquiry—

- (a) he intentionally suppresses or conceals a document that is, and that he knows or believes to be, a relevant document, or
- (c) he intentionally alters or destroys any such document.

For the purposes of this subsection a document is a “relevant document” if it is likely that the inquiry panel would (if aware of its existence) wish to be provided with it.

Please do not send evidence to the Inquiry yet unless and until we ask you to. This notice is intended to ensure that potentially relevant information is preserved.

The Inquiry expects everyone engaging with it to do so openly and constructively. Any requests for information or evidence made by the Inquiry should be responded to promptly, fully and with complete candour.

If you have any queries about the handling or retention of potentially relevant information, please contact the Inquiry: contactus@grooming-gangs.independent-inquiry.uk