

The Statutory Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs

Protocol on the Disclosure of Documents

1. This document explains how the Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs ('the Inquiry') will approach the provision and disclosure of documents. It outlines the procedures governing how documents are requested, received and handled by the Inquiry, and the obligations on those providing material, including the steps required to ensure that relevant information is identified, preserved and supplied.
2. The purpose of this Protocol is to ensure that providers of documents understand the Inquiry's procedures for (a) the provision of documents and the handling of such documents; and (b) prompt delivery of documents to the Inquiry in the correct form.
3. The procedures outlined below are not intended to cover every eventuality or every procedural issue that may arise. It follows that, where the interests of justice and fairness so require, the Inquiry may need to depart from this Protocol. Further, this Protocol may be amended from time to time, in which case an amended version will be published on the Inquiry's website.

Definitions

4. In this Protocol:
 - a. 'Document' means anything in which information of any description is recorded, whether in paper or in electronic form. It will include but is not limited to, contractual documents, governing/constitutional documents, guides/codes of conduct, design plans, technical drawings, blueprints, reports, reviews, committee/board minutes, meeting/attendance notes, manuscript notes, memoranda, letters (including fax), leaflets, circulars, emails (internal and external), messages on social media and

communication platforms, legislation, policy documents/statements, notebooks, witness statements, photographs, video and audio recordings and physical evidence.

- b. 'Material Provider' or 'MP' means any person, institution, or organisation who has been asked to provide documents to the Inquiry or who has provided documents voluntarily to the Inquiry. For the avoidance of doubt, it includes His Majesty's Government and any Department of State or Minister of the Crown.

Provision of Documents to the Inquiry

5. Wherever possible the Chair intends to rely on voluntary co-operation for production to the Inquiry of the documents she considers necessary to fulfil her Terms of Reference.
6. The Chair will normally make a request for voluntary production of documents by means of a letter from the Inquiry's legal team to the person believed to have custody or control of them (i.e. a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006). The Chair expects that all parties to whom a request of this kind is addressed will co-operate with the Inquiry and will provide all relevant material without the need for her to exercise her powers of compulsion of documents or evidence. However, the Chair will consider exercising those powers if the response to such or any later request is, for example, refused, or incomplete, or not provided by the stated deadline.
7. MPs, including legal representatives, should provide documents requested by the Chair, together with any other documents they consider to be relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, without delay and within the time limits specified by the Inquiry in any relevant request.
8. MPs are expected to undertake comprehensive, thorough and rigorous searches in response to a request for documents. MPs should keep a detailed

written record at the time of the search that will enable them to complete a Disclosure Statement (see paragraph 15 below). This will apply whether the request is contained in a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, or a notice issued under section 21 of the Inquiries Act 2005, or otherwise.

9. For the avoidance of doubt, a document is in an MP's control if the MP has:
 - a. physical possession of it; or
 - b. a right to possession of it; or
 - c. a right to inspect or take copies of it.
10. Persons who hold potentially relevant documents are reminded about the duty to preserve documents and evidence which appear to be relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. Steps should be taken to ensure any such evidence and documentation is not destroyed, distorted, or otherwise altered.
11. All documents provided to the Inquiry must be originals or, if the original is not available, the best available copies, intact and in unredacted form, save when the Inquiry's Protocol on Restriction Orders, Redaction and Anonymity applies.

Material changes or updates to Documents

12. In relation to any document provided to the Inquiry by a MP, the MP should inform the Inquiry of any material change or update to that document occurring after the date of its provision to the Inquiry of which it becomes aware and provide the updated document. This will apply whether the document was provided in response to a Rule 9 Request, or a notice issued under section 21 of the Act, or by way of voluntary disclosure.
13. The MP will inform the Inquiry of the change within 21 days after it is made and may choose to inform the Inquiry periodically of such changes rather than on a document-by-document basis.

Disclosure Statement

14. The Inquiry may request a signed disclosure statement if it deems the same to be necessary. The purpose of such a statement will be to confirm:
 - a. a MP's search methodology, to provide clear assurance that the Inquiry's request has been met so far as is reasonable in all of the circumstances and to explain, so far as can be ascertained, what has become of any information which cannot be produced (including, where possible, identification of the last person known to have had access to documents that are no longer held); and
 - b. where a MP has withheld the partial or complete disclosure of a Document on the grounds of privilege, or another rule of law, it should confirm in the disclosure statement the basis on which the document has been withheld, including, where relevant, whether on the grounds of either Litigation or Legal Advice Privilege.

Distribution, Retention and Publication

15. The Inquiry regards it as important that its proceedings are conducted in as open and transparent a manner as is possible. This means that it expects to disclose material to Core Participants and may (regardless of disclosure to any person) seek to use such material as part of its body of documentary evidence to which reference may be made by its experts or in its reports and as such may form part of the Inquiry record. The Inquiry will also make certain information available to the public via its website, live-link or broadcast (where considered appropriate).
16. The Inquiry's Protocol on Restriction Orders, Redaction and Anonymity addresses issues of redaction, and the withholding of certain documents and the Inquiry's Privacy Notice addresses the retention of information, including by the National Archives at the conclusion of the Inquiry.

Contact and Review

17. Any questions concerning this Protocol should be directed to the Inquiry on Solicitor@grooming-gangs.independent-inquiry.uk.

18. This Protocol takes effect on the date set out below and applies unless and until updated or replaced. This Protocol may be revised during the course of the Inquiry. Any amended version will be published on the Inquiry's website following approval by the Chair.

10 June 2026