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GROOMING GANGS INQUIRY ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR PUBLIC NATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY HEARINGS AND NAMES FIRST THREE LOCAL INVESTIGATION AREAS AS OLDHAM, BRADFORD AND KEIGHLEY, AND LONDON

The Statutory Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs has today announced its plans to hold its first national public accountability hearings by the end of the year, with individuals and institutions compelled to explain publicly what they did or did not do to protect children from being sexually abused and harmed by grooming gangs.

The Inquiry is also naming the first areas for its specific local investigations: Oldham, Bradford and Keighley, and London. Further areas will be announced over the coming months.

The Inquiry will also review whether institutions and individuals in other areas which have already had reviews into grooming gangs, such as Telford, Rochdale, Oxford and Rotherham, have implemented the changes recommended to them following those previous investigations.

Alongside these announcements, the Inquiry is publishing its Victims and Survivors Charter, co-produced with victims and survivors of grooming gangs, which sets out how victims and survivors will be supported to share their experiences with the Inquiry and influence its work.

The Statutory Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs is investigating the exploitation and sexual abuse of children by grooming gangs, and the failure of both national and local authorities to protect them over decades. The Inquiry is chaired by Baroness Anne Longfield CBE, with panel members Zoë Billingham CBE and Eleanor Kelly CBE.

National Public Accountability hearings

The first national accountability hearings will take place at the end of this year and will focus on national and local institutions and individuals responsible for supporting victims and survivors - the services that should have identified and stepped in when terrible atrocities and abuse were happening.

This will include many different institutions including Central Government departments, national police organisations, the CPS, politicians, local councils, the NHS, and others.

The second part of the accountability hearings will focus on the areas that have already had inquiries or major reviews to assess their progress.

The Inquiry has identified more than 800 recommendations relating to grooming gangs and child sexual exploitation and abuse across previous reviews, reports and inquiries dating back to the 1990s. Its ongoing analysis indicates that there has been significant inconsistency in how these recommendations have been implemented. Where recommendations have not been implemented, these accountability hearings will examine why not.

The third part of the national accountability hearings will be to investigate tech companies and the role of technology in the exploitation of children by grooming gangs.

The Inquiry will make early recommendations on all three parts of these national accountability hearings, which will then be tracked throughout the Inquiry. Towards the end of the Inquiry, it will check its recommendations are being implemented through follow up

public hearings.

Local investigations

The Inquiry's local area investigations in Oldham, Bradford and Keighley, and London will examine in detail at what happened in a particular place, including how children were targeted and exploited, how institutions and individuals responded, how victims and survivors were treated, and what needs to change. The experiences of victims and survivors in those areas will be at the heart of these investigations.

The Inquiry has selected these areas based on a range of factors, including victim and survivor experiences, indications of harm or risk, previous reviews and unresolved issues, evidence or allegations suggesting possible institutional or systemic failure, and levels of public concern.

Each local investigation will help the Inquiry to build a clearer national picture and feeds directly into its national findings and recommendations.

Oldham was announced as a local area for investigation last year by the then Home Secretary. Work there is already underway and the Inquiry is gathering evidence now.

In Bradford and Keighley, concerns have been raised over many years by victims and survivors, campaigners, elected representatives and others. These concerns have formed an important part of the case for investigation and will now be examined directly by the Inquiry.

London presents a different context because of its scale and complexity, with multiple boroughs and overlapping local, regional and national systems. The Inquiry will examine how group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse by grooming gangs has been identified and responded to, including London's links with surrounding or connected areas. It will also take account of relevant work underway, including by the London Assembly.

Further local areas will be announced later this year, guided by the criteria for local investigations that the Inquiry is also publishing today, and any further evidence it receives. The Inquiry will also investigate those areas which have already had a previous investigation through other inquiries, to examine their progress on implementing recommendations.

Victims and Survivors Charter

The Inquiry has victims and survivors at its heart and is publishing its Victims and Survivors Charter, co-produced with victims and survivors. The Charter sets out how victims and survivors will be supported, listened to, kept informed and how they will be key to shaping the Inquiry's work.

Baroness Anne Longfield CBE, Chair of the Inquiry, said:

"The Inquiry's task is to find out why this catastrophic failure of the state happened and continues to happen, to establish why victims and survivors of abuse were failed, and to hold to account those institutions and individuals who failed them.

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“Our National Accountability Hearings will begin before the end of the year. There have been many inquiries and reviews into grooming gangs and Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse over the past 20 years, putting forward over 800 recommendations, many of which have not been implemented. These hearings will help us to establish what national institutions and services should have been doing to implement these findings and to protect children from abuse and harm - and what, if any, progress has been made in areas where investigations have taken place.

“We are determined that our work ensures that no further inquiries into grooming gangs will ever be needed.”

Zoe Billingham CBE, said:

“These are the first three local area investigations - more will be announced as the Inquiry progresses. We will continue to follow the evidence wherever it leads, gathering and analysing evidence from across England and Wales, including from areas not yet selected for a local investigation.

“We will be forensic in examining what happened in these areas - how institutions responded, why children were not protected, and why opportunities to prevent harm were missed.

“We will look at what was known, how decisions were made, and why earlier action that could have protected children did not happen. We will look at the role culture, ethnicity and religion may have played in the decisions that were taken, and whether some in authority were too squeamish to act.”

Eleanor Kelly CBE, said:

“Our Victims and Survivors Charter shows our deep commitment to ensuring victims and survivors are at the heart of this Inquiry, and that they will continue to shape our work throughout. If victims and survivors have information to share with the Inquiry, they can do so in a way that feels safe for them, with support available every step of the way.

“The Inquiry is determined to find the answers that victims and survivors have been denied for so long. We will set out what must change and hold those responsible to account, so that children are protected as they should be - and these horrific failures are never allowed to happen again.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

- For press and media enquiries: pressqueries@grooming-gangs.independent-inquiry.uk
- For general enquiries: contactus@grooming-gangs.independent-inquiry.uk
- [Read the Terms of Reference on our website.](#)

About the Inquiry

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- The Statutory Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs is investigating the sexual abuse and exploitation of children by grooming gangs across England and Wales.
- It has full legal powers to compel witnesses in the jurisdiction to give evidence and require organisations to provide documents.
- The Inquiry is a statutory inquiry, established under the Inquiries Act 2005. It is fully independent of the Government and of all institutions it is investigating.
- It was set up following Recommendation 2 of Baroness Louise Casey's National Audit on Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (June 2025).
- The National Audit found systemic failures and institutional paralysis had enabled grooming gangs to operate for many years.
- The Home Secretary appointed Baroness Anne Longfield CBE as Chair, with panellists Zoë Billingham CBE and Eleanor Kelly CBE, on 9 December 2025.
- The Inquiry formally began work on 31 March 2026 and has a maximum duration of three years.
- The Inquiry has a budget of £65 million.