

First Local Area Investigations

The Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs has selected the Bradford and Keighley and London for Local Area Investigations. These areas, alongside Oldham, will form a part of the Inquiry's initial Local Area Investigations.

The Inquiry's Terms of Reference require it to conduct local investigations into group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse by grooming gangs [across both England and Wales](#). Local investigations will examine the experience of victims and survivors, what happened in particular areas, how institutions responded, whether children were protected, whether victims and survivors were heard and supported, and what lessons must be learned for local and national change. Victims and survivors will be at the centre of the Inquiry's approach.

The selection of Oldham, Bradford and Keighley, and London reflects the Chair and Panel's judgement that early investigation of these areas to be of the highest priority in discharging its Terms of Reference. The Inquiry has not yet made findings about the nature or extent of abuse, institutional failings, or the responsibility of any individual or organisation in those areas. Those are matters for investigation. The selection of these areas also does not mean that other areas are less important or that they will not be considered. Further local areas will be selected in due course in accordance with the Inquiry's published [Local Area Investigation Selection Criteria](#).

Approach to selecting the first areas

The Inquiry has considered its published Local Area Investigation Selection Criteria when identifying the first areas for investigation. The first areas have been selected because the Chair and Panel consider that focused investigation of those areas at this stage is the most urgent priority in discharging its Terms of Reference.

In selecting the first areas, the Inquiry has considered available information at this stage, including:

- victim and survivor experience;
- indications of prevalence, harm or risk of group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse by grooming gangs;
- previous reviews, investigations and unresolved issues, where relevant;
- evidence or allegations suggesting possible institutional or systemic failure;
- public concern and confidence;
- the potential for wider national learning;
- the need to begin local investigations promptly while wider evidence-gathering continues

The Inquiry recognises that the prevalence of grooming gangs and group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse is not clearly or consistently captured in any single dataset.

The Inquiry's local investigations will sit alongside its National Accountability Investigation hearings. Evidence from the local investigations will also inform the Inquiry's national findings and recommendations. Evidence from the National accountability hearings will focus on national and local organisations and individuals responsible for supporting victims and survivors. It will help the Inquiry understand the services that should have identified and stepped in when these terrible atrocities were happening and whether local failures were caused or contributed to by national policy, oversight, inspection, data, funding, guidance, accountability or implementation gaps.

The Inquiry's [Local Area Investigation Scope](#), published alongside this document, explains in more detail the issues that Local Area Investigations will examine. Each of the first Local Area Investigations will allow the Inquiry to examine, in a focused local context, issues including the identification of group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse by grooming gangs, safeguarding and institutional responses, policing, partnership working, victim and survivor experience, previous learning, and the relationship between local practice and national systems. The precise scope of each investigation will be developed as evidence is gathered.

The Inquiry will continue to gather and analyse evidence from across England and Wales, including from areas not selected for an initial Local Area Investigation.

Oldham

Oldham has a specific place in the establishment of the Inquiry. In her published, [letter to Oldham Council](#) dated 9 December 2025, the Home Secretary referred to the earlier commitment to develop a local inquiries framework and to support local inquiries into child sexual exploitation, including funding for Oldham Council to undertake a local review. She also stated that the national Inquiry would undertake targeted investigations in local areas, would have full statutory powers under the Inquiries Act 2005, and that it was important that Oldham should benefit fully from those statutory powers and resources. The Home Secretary confirmed that the Chair had agreed to prioritise Oldham as an area for local investigation under the national Inquiry.

In her published [reply to the Home Secretary](#), the Chair confirmed that the Inquiry would prioritise Oldham as one of the areas for review.

The decision to include Oldham in the first phase of local work is also consistent with the existence of published material concerning historic child sexual exploitation and safeguarding responses in Oldham, including the [2022 Assurance Review](#), and continuing public concern about whether earlier reviews and responses have fully addressed the issues raised by Victims and Survivors and others.

Against that background, Oldham will be investigated as part of the first phase of local work.

Bradford and Keighley

Bradford and Keighley has been selected as one of the first Local Area Investigations.

Bradford and Keighley has been selected because the Chair and Panel consider that it is appropriate for early local investigation in light of a combination of factors, including Victim and Survivor experience and concerns raised publicly about group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse by grooming gangs in the Bradford district, including Keighley. Keighley is part of the City of Bradford Metropolitan District, and the Inquiry considers it appropriate to identify it expressly because concerns relating to Keighley

and the wider Bradford district have formed an important part of the public case for local investigation.

The Inquiry is aware that concerns about Bradford and Keighley have been raised by victims and survivors, campaigners, elected representatives and others over a significant period.

The Inquiry will consider the appropriate geographical and evidential scope of the Bradford and Keighley investigation as evidence is gathered, including whether the investigation should examine issues across the wider Bradford district where that is necessary to discharge the Terms of Reference.

This investigation will hold local agencies and individuals to account and seek to bring justice for victims and survivors. It is also expected to assist the Inquiry in examining how concerns about grooming gangs are identified, escalated and addressed over time, and how local evidence can inform wider national learning.

London

London has been selected as one of the first Local Area Investigations.

The Chair and Panel consider that early investigation of London is justified by a combination of factors. It presents a different context from many other local areas because of its scale and relationship as a capital city with other areas of England and Wales. It has the largest Police force in the country and a complex system with multiple boroughs and national organisations involved. It has the highest rate of referrals for child sexual exploitation in the Country.

The Inquiry will build a clearer picture of what is happening in London and its role in the national picture, including the current work the London assembly are doing on Grooming Gangs. The inquiry will consider the wider network of grooming gangs across London's satellite towns and cities. It will investigate the role of London in the national network of grooming gangs.

The Inquiry will consider the appropriate scope and structure of the London investigation as evidence is gathered. That will include examining pan-London systems, particular boroughs, cross-boundary safeguarding, policing and partnership arrangements, and links between London and surrounding or satellite areas where the evidence shows relevant movement, trafficking, exploitation routes or associated criminal exploitation, including issues linked or analogous to county lines.

Further local areas

The Inquiry will continue to gather and analyse evidence to inform the selection of further Local Area Investigations.

The investigation of Oldham, Bradford and Keighley, and London is the start of the Inquiry's local investigative programme and The Chair and Panel will continue to consider further local areas and will select further areas across both England and Wales where they consider that investigation is justified by the published criteria and would assist the Inquiry in discharging its Terms of Reference.

The Inquiry will also keep the scope and sequencing of all Local Area Investigations under review. This may be necessary to protect fairness, avoid prejudice to criminal investigations or proceedings, respond to emerging evidence, or ensure that the Inquiry remains deliverable within its Terms of Reference and timetable.