

Further Area Investigations

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

The Statutory Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs (IIGG) has announced area investigations in Wales and in Birmingham.

In June, the Inquiry announced local area investigations in Oldham, Bradford and Keighley, and London. The Inquiry will also continue to collect and examine information and evidence from England and Wales as part of its National Accountability work and the National Listening Project.

The latest area investigations in Wales and in Birmingham will examine the experience of victims and survivors, what happened in these two locations, 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 Inquiry will investigate systemic, institutional and individual failures in the response to victims and survivors, including how they were treated, supported and perceived by statutory services, and whether organisational cultures or professional attitudes contributed to those failings. It will examine whether behaviours, practices, inaction or potential cover-ups enabled harm or hindered effective safeguarding and identify those individuals and organisations responsible.

The Inquiry will also examine any cultural, ethnic, religious or other factors that may have contributed to patterns of abuse or influenced how institutions responded, following the evidence wherever it leads.

The investigations in Wales and in Birmingham will also assist the Inquiry in examining the nature, adequacy and timeliness of the response of institutions to the issue of grooming gangs, and the impact upon individuals who reported such abuse, as well as examining whether or if known failures have led to change and/or what further work needs to be undertaken to minimise the risk to young people of such abuse at present.

The decision to undertake these investigations does not mean that the Inquiry has reached conclusions about the nature or extent of abuse, institutional failings, or the responsibility of any individual or organisation. These are matters for investigation. Nor does it mean that other areas are less important or will not be considered in the future.

Approach to determining the next investigations

The Inquiry has applied its published [Local Area Investigation Selection Criteria](#) to these decisions, alongside other available evidence and information, in determining the next phase of its investigative work.

These criteria are not a rigid scoring system, and no single factor determines whether an area is selected. Quantitative information has informed, but has not determined, the selection.

In reaching its decision, the Inquiry has considered the selection criteria and the available information, including:

- victim and survivor experience;
- indications of the prevalence, harm or risk of group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse;
- previous reviews, investigations and unresolved issues;
- evidence or allegations suggesting possible institutional or systemic failure;
- public concern and confidence;
- the potential for wider national learning; and
- the deliverability and sequencing of the investigations.

The Inquiry has also considered the wider public interest, including the value of examining different institutional, geographical and safeguarding contexts and the contribution each investigation could make to the Inquiry's national findings.

Wales

The Statutory Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs is a national inquiry covering all of England and Wales. The Inquiry's investigation within Wales will provide an important opportunity to examine safeguarding and multi-agency responses, the operation of devolved arrangements, and cross-border working between organisations in Wales and England.

The Inquiry continues to develop the detailed scope of its work in Wales, including the specific areas of interest, and will provide a further update on its nature and extent at a later stage.

Birmingham

The decision to investigate Birmingham reflects the combination of factors and information including victim and survivor experience, indications of the prevalence, harm and risk and public concern. Birmingham has been selected because the information currently available provides a cumulative case for examining how agencies identify, share information and respond to child sexual exploitation across this large metropolitan area.

The Inquiry considers that this investigation a vital opportunity to examine shared-system accountability, safeguarding and partnership working across Birmingham and, where the evidence supports it, interconnected areas.

The investigation will focus initially on Birmingham and may extend to surrounding, connected or satellite areas where the evidence supports it. The precise geographical and evidential scope will be developed as evidence is gathered.

Further local work

The Inquiry will continue to gather and analyse evidence from across England and Wales, including from areas that have not been selected for a Local Area Investigation.

The scope and sequencing of all Local Area Investigations will remain under review. This will allow the IIGG to respond to emerging evidence, protect the fairness of its work, avoid prejudice to criminal investigations or proceedings, and ensure that its programme remains deliverable within its Terms of Reference and timetable.