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GROOMING GANGS INQUIRY ANNOUNCES LATEST LOCATIONS FOR INVESTIGATION

The Statutory Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs has today announced the beginning of its investigation in Wales, as well as a local area investigation into Birmingham. Both investigations will examine the sexual abuse and exploitation of children by grooming gangs and the response of organisations responsible for protecting children.

The investigations will form part of the Inquiry's wider national programme of work and sit alongside the local investigations which are already underway in Oldham, Bradford and Keighley, and London.

Each investigation will help the Inquiry establish why institutions and organisations failed to protect victims and survivors of abuse, and feed directly into its national findings and recommendations.

As its work continues, the Inquiry will announce further investigations in the future.

Alongside today's announcement, the Inquiry has also launched new ways for victims and survivors to help shape its work through the next phase of its National Listening Project.

The Statutory Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs is investigating the sexual abuse and exploitation 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.

The Inquiry's area investigations examine what happened in a particular area, why children were not identified and protected, how institutions responded, whether victims and survivors were heard and supported, and what lessons must be learned to prevent future abuse and harm.

They will investigate systemic, organisational and individual failures in the response to victims and survivors, including how they were treated, supported and perceived by public authorities and other organisations. Victims and survivors will be central to these investigations.

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.

Area investigations may include public hearings, allowing the Inquiry to examine evidence in public and hold organisations and individuals to account.

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's Terms of Reference require it to consider group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse in Wales. The Inquiry is developing the precise scope of its work in Wales, including

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specific areas of interest, and will provide a further update on its nature and extent at a later stage.

Birmingham

The local area investigation will focus initially on Birmingham but 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.

The decision to investigate Birmingham reflects a combination of factors and information, including victim and survivor experience, indications of prevalence, harm and risk, and public concern.

Birmingham has been selected because the information currently available provides a strong basis for examining how organisations identify, share information about and respond to child sexual exploitation across a large metropolitan area.

The Inquiry considers that this investigation offers an important opportunity to examine accountability, safeguarding and partnership working across Birmingham.

National Listening Project

The Inquiry is expanding opportunities for victims and survivors to shape the Inquiry.

The National Listening Project enables victims and survivors, family members, friends and survivor groups to share their experiences, perspectives and views with the Inquiry. From the beginning of October, people will now be able to contribute in new ways, through written submissions, voice recordings and video recordings, and one-to-one conversations conducted by trained facilitators and supported by specialist emotional support services.

The information shared with the Inquiry from victims and survivors will help the Inquiry understand the impact of abuse, identify issues requiring further examination, shape lines of inquiry and inform future recommendations. Victims and survivors are not simply contributing evidence to the Inquiry. Their experiences help shape its investigations, findings and recommendations.

No one needs to wait for an investigation in their area to have their voice heard. The Inquiry covers all of England and Wales and welcomes information from anyone affected by grooming gangs and child sexual exploitation and abuse.

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

“The investigation into Wales will help us understand what happened, why children were not protected, how institutions responded, and what needs to change to prevent future abuse.

“We will follow the evidence wherever it leads. We will examine failures in Wales where they occurred, identify who was responsible, and ensure organisations and individuals are held accountable for the decisions they took, or failed to take, to protect children.

“Victims and survivors in Wales have waited too long for answers. This work is about establishing the truth, delivering accountability, and setting out clearly what must change so children are better protected in the future.”

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Zoë Billingham CBE said:

“The local area investigation in Birmingham will allow us to examine these issues in depth and understand how safeguarding systems operated in practice.

“We will look carefully at what organisations knew, how decisions were made, how agencies worked together, and why opportunities to protect children were missed.

“What we learn through these investigations will help us build a clearer national picture and inform the Inquiry’s wider findings and recommendations.”

Eleanor Kelly CBE said:

“Everything we do is strengthened by listening to those with lived experience. Their experiences help us understand what happened, challenge assumptions, identify issues requiring further examination and inform the recommendations we make.

“Through the National Listening Project, we are creating more opportunities for people to engage with the Inquiry in the way that feels right for them, whether through written accounts, voice recordings, video recordings or future one-to-one conversations.

“We know that for many victims and survivors, talking about what happened can be incredibly difficult. That is why we are committed to creating opportunities for participation that are accessible, supportive and trauma-informed, with specialist emotional support available for those who choose to take part in one-to-one conversations.

“No one needs to wait for an investigation in their area to have their voice heard.

“This Inquiry was established to provide answers for victims and survivors, wherever they live. Their experiences will continue to shape our investigations, findings and recommendations from beginning to end.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- For press and media enquiries: PressEnquiries@grooming-gangs.independent-inquiry.uk
- For general enquiries: contactus@grooming-gangs.independent-inquiry.uk
- Further information about the Inquiry, including its Terms of Reference, Local Area Investigation Selection Criteria and National Listening Project, [is available on the Inquiry website](#).

About the Inquiry

- The Statutory Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs is investigating the sexual abuse and exploitation of children by grooming gangs across England and Wales.

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- It has full legal powers to compel witnesses to give evidence and require organisations and individuals to provide documents and information.
- The Inquiry is a statutory inquiry established under the Inquiries Act 2005. It is fully independent of Government and all institutions it is investigating.
- It was established following Recommendation 2 of Baroness Louise Casey's National Audit on Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (June 2025).
- The National Audit found that 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, in December 2025.
- The Inquiry formally began work on 31 March 2026 and is expected to conclude by March 2029.
- The Inquiry continues to gather evidence nationally through investigations, the National Listening Project and future National Accountability Hearings.