

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO GROOMING GANGS AND OPERATION BEACONPORT

Status and purpose of this MoU

1. This Memorandum of Understanding ('MOU') is between:
 - a. The Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs ('the Inquiry'), which is a statutory inquiry investigating the sexual abuse and exploitation of children by grooming gangs and the failures of institutions responsible for protecting them. The Inquiry was established by the Home Secretary and is chaired by Baroness Anne Longfield CBE; and
 - b. Operation Beaconport, which is a national policing operation investigating group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation. Operation Beaconport is led by the National Crime Agency in partnership with other agencies including the CSE Taskforce, Tackling Organised Exploitation Programme, the Hydrant Programme, the NPCC, the Crown Prosecution Service and local police forces.
2. This MOU is intended to record the principles, protocols and mechanisms for collaboration between the Inquiry and Operation Beaconport ('the Participants'). Its primary objective is to promote constructive co-operation between the two, whilst recognising the independent remit of each.
3. This MOU is not intended to be legally binding and does not create legally enforceable obligations.
4. The Participants recognise that this MOU has been drafted at a very early stage of their collaboration. Both the Inquiry and Operation Beaconport are proceeding at pace, and it is inevitable that further practical considerations regarding their joint working will arise in the coming months. For that reason, the operation of this MOU will be kept under review and the Participants will undertake a formal review within 6 months of publication, making any amendments as considered necessary.

Context and guiding principles

5. Operation Beaconport and the Inquiry were both established following recommendations made by Baroness Casey in the National Audit that she conducted into Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, which was published in June 2025.
6. The Inquiry and Operation Beaconport are, however, independent of each other and are conducted under separate legal powers and duties.
7. The Inquiry must act within its Terms of Reference. It must not rule on, and has no power to determine, any person's civil or criminal liability. It will not seek to direct the conduct of any criminal investigation or operational decision by Operation Beaconport or any police force. It will use all reasonable efforts, consistent with its statutory duties, to conduct its work in a way which does not impede, potentially prejudice, or compromise ongoing or future criminal investigations or prosecutions.
8. Operation Beaconport will use all reasonable efforts to assist the Inquiry, consistent with maintaining the independence and integrity of relevant law enforcement functions, including where appropriate sensitive operational considerations. The assistance provided by Operation Beaconport to the Inquiry may include providing the Inquiry (where lawful and appropriate) with information and analysis from its operation that may help shape the Inquiry's work.
9. The Participants recognise the shared aim of improving outcomes for victims and survivors, and of supporting justice, accountability and systemic learning. Further, the Participants will have regard to trauma-informed principles and seek to minimise, wherever possible, any unnecessary adverse impact on victims and survivors arising from the operation of this MOU.
10. The Participants acknowledge the importance of public confidence that institutions are not "marking their own homework". Operation Beaconport will ensure this through independent review, oversight and assurance of investigations arising from Inquiry referrals and will retain accountability for assuring that such investigations

are conducted thoroughly, robustly and fairly and in accordance with appropriate investigative standards.

11. The Participants further recognise the importance of maintaining public confidence that allegations involving institutional failure receive appropriate independent consideration through established policing, oversight and accountability arrangements.

Referrals

12. As a statutory Inquiry governed by the Inquiries Act 2005 and Inquiry Rules 2006, the Inquiry will be able to ensure public and transparent communication of information and evidence through its public hearings and disclosure that is made available to the public, and in its published reports.

13. However, the Participants acknowledge that this public route may not be sufficient in all circumstances, particularly where:

- a. information is provided privately by victims and survivors
- b. where there may be safeguarding concerns, or
- c. where publication is not intended or may not occur within a timeframe consistent with the protection of individuals or the proper administration of justice.

14. The Inquiry may, where it considers it lawful, necessary and proportionate to do so, refer information to Operation Beaconport outside the public mechanisms described in paragraph 12.

15. Such referrals may include, but are not limited to, circumstances where there is a real risk of serious current or future harm to an individual or individuals.

16. Any referral under paragraph 14 will be limited to information which the Inquiry considers necessary and proportionate for the identified purpose.

17. Operation Beaconport will independently review and assess all referrals made by the Inquiry. Where a referral discloses an allegation of group-based child sexual

exploitation and abuse, Operation Beaconport will assess whether a criminal investigation or reinvestigation is required. Where such an investigation or reinvestigation is assessed to be appropriate, Operation Beaconport will provide independent oversight and assurance throughout the life of that investigation, including monitoring its progress, scrutinising key decisions; and when appropriate the NCA undertaking investigation directly. Operation Beaconport will report on the progress (to the extent that is possible without causing prejudice to the investigation) and outcome of investigations and will retain accountability for assuring that all investigations arising from Inquiry referrals are conducted thoroughly, robustly and fairly, that all reasonable lines of enquiry are appropriately pursued, and that investigations are only concluded once it is satisfied that the necessary investigative standards have been met. Through these mechanisms, Operation Beaconport will provide independent assurance over the handling and outcome of all investigations.

18. Matters relating to police misconduct referred from the Inquiry will be referred by Operation Beaconport to the Appropriate Authority. The appropriate policing misconduct procedures will be followed, in accordance with statutory provisions. Operation Beaconport will maintain appropriate referral, monitoring, assurance and escalation arrangements in respect of such matters.

19. Where information proposed to be shared under paragraph 14 includes material provided by a victim or survivor:

- a. the Inquiry will seek to proceed transparently and with the individual's informed consent;
- b. the Inquiry will explain the circumstances in which information they provide may be shared with Operation Beaconport;
- c. the Inquiry will explain the unlikely circumstances in which it may be required, or may consider it necessary, to share information with others who can help without consent, including where someone may be at risk of serious harm;

- d. the Inquiry will explain the extent to which an individual may choose whether to provide identifying or contact details, subject to the Inquiry making clear that anonymity cannot always be guaranteed where the information itself may identify them; and
- e. in the unlikely event where the Inquiry considers it necessary to share information without prior notification or consent, including where seeking consent would risk serious harm, undermine the purpose of the referral, prejudice an investigation or give rise to safeguarding concerns, including concerns that notification may create or exacerbate a risk to the safety or welfare of any person, or other fairness or operational concerns, decisions will be taken in accordance with the Inquiry's safeguarding and information governance arrangements and an appropriate record will be kept.

Victims and Survivors communication

- 20. The Participants agree that clear and trauma informed communications are essential to victim and survivor confidence.
- 21. The Inquiry will ensure that victims, survivors and other individuals engaging with it are provided with clear information, before or at the point of engagement wherever practicable, about the circumstances in which information they provide may be shared with Operation Beaconport or another appropriate authority, in order to support informed engagement and disclosure.
- 22. The Participants will work together to ensure that appropriate information is shared between them regarding referrals made under this MOU, to support their respective functions and responsibilities, and to ensure victims and survivors receive clear information about the referral process and what they can reasonably expect following a referral.
- 23. These communications should ensure that victims and survivors understand:
 - a. the respective roles of the Inquiry, Operation Beaconport and other policing/ investigatory bodies;
 - b. what to expect at each stage of the referral process;

- c. what information can and cannot be provided regarding referrals and any subsequent consideration of those referrals; and
- d. how victims and survivors will be kept appropriately informed regarding the referral process – whether by the Inquiry, Operation Beaconport or a local force.

Deconfliction

24. The Inquiry will work with Operation Beaconport, local policing and Crown Prosecution Service using their best endeavours to prevent prejudice to current or future criminal investigations.

Information Sharing

25. The Inquiry may request Operation Beaconport to share information for the purposes of assisting its work. Such requests will be made by the Inquiry and addressed by Operation Beaconport using a form and a process that will be agreed by the Participants.

26. On receipt of a request made under paragraph 25, Operation Beaconport may, where appropriate, lawful, necessary and proportionate, share information with the Inquiry for the purposes of:

- a. supporting the Inquiry's scoping, planning and thematic analysis;
- b. identifying and managing risks of prejudice to current or future criminal investigations or prosecutions; and
- c. assisting the Participants to identify systemic issues and relevant learning.

27. Information that may be shared pursuant to such a request might include:

- a. intelligence products or analytical assessments relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference;
- b. information regarding emerging themes or systemic issues identified by Operation Beaconport; and

- c. other contextual or intelligence information reasonably requested by the Inquiry for the purposes set out in paragraph 26.

28. Where Operation Beaconport shares information with the Inquiry further to a request made under paragraph 25, the Inquiry will handle the information securely, use it only for the relevant agreed purpose, and not disclose onwards or publish the information without appropriate permission or lawful basis.

29. For the avoidance of doubt, a request for information under paragraph 25 above does not constitute a request for evidence under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006. However, nothing in this MoU limits the Inquiry's ability to seek information or documents by way of a request under Rule 9 or, where appropriate, a notice under section 21 of the Inquiries Act 2005.

Review and amendments

30. Communication between the Inquiry and Operation Beaconport on matters of disclosure and matters under this MoU shall be between the Solicitor to the Inquiry, Zaqia Rashid, and NCA Legal, Civil Litigation Team on behalf of Operation Beaconport (in the first instance).

31. Routine liaison will occur through agreed working level leads from the Inquiry Secretariat and Operation Beaconport, supported where appropriate by regular liaison between senior representatives of the Participants including structured engagement between operational and inquiry leadership.

32. As indicated at paragraph 4 above, the terms of this MOU will be kept under continuous review.

14 October 2026