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**GROOMING GANGS INQUIRY ANNOUNCES DATES FOR ITS FIRST NATIONAL
ACCOUNTABILITY HEARINGS**

The Statutory Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs has today announced further details of its National Accountability Hearings.

The opening phases of the National Accountability Hearings will take place in London during the weeks of 14 December 2026 and 11 January 2027, with further hearings planned for March and April 2027. The opening phase of the hearings will focus on the experiences and perspectives of victims and survivors.

The National Accountability Hearings will build on Baroness Louise Casey's 2025 National Audit on Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and examine why lessons identified through previous inquiries, reviews, inspections and investigations too often failed to result in meaningful change. They will require organisations and institutions to explain what action they took to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, what progress was made, and why recommendations did not deliver the improvements that were promised.

The Inquiry's national hearings and local investigations are parts of the same work, informing each other to build a clear national picture and final recommendations. What happens locally helps the Inquiry test whether national systems worked in practice, and what it hears nationally will be tested against real experiences on the ground. This is how the Inquiry will assess whether meaningful change has taken place, and where it has not, why not and what needs to change.

The hearings will begin by hearing the perspectives of victims and survivors, including whether the changes promised following previous inquiries, reviews and recommendations were reflected in their experiences and whether they believe meaningful progress has been made.

This evidence will help shape the questions organisations must answer in later phases of the hearings, when the Inquiry will examine previous findings and recommendations and how organisations and senior leaders responded to them. Organisations will be required to explain what action they took following earlier findings and recommendations, who was responsible for delivery, what progress has been made and why implementation was delayed, incomplete or allowed to drift.

Following the opening National Accountability Hearings, the Inquiry will produce its first report and recommendations, focusing on the changes needed to strengthen implementation, oversight and accountability.

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Evidence from the hearings will also inform other future stages of the Inquiry's work, helping it understand why recommendations did not always lead to meaningful change and what must now happen to ensure children are not failed in the same way again.

Today, the Inquiry has also published the list of Core Participants for the National Accountability Hearings, which includes a number of victims and survivors and groups supporting them.

In awarding Core Participant status, the Chair of the Inquiry considers whether a person played, or may have played, a direct and significant role in relation to the matters to which the inquiry relates, whether they have a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which the inquiry relates, or whether the person may be subject to explicit or significant criticism during the inquiry proceedings or in the report, or in any interim report.

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

"Over many years, inquiries, reviews, inspections and investigations have identified serious failings in how children were protected from sexual exploitation by grooming gangs and made recommendations for change.

"Reviews have been held before. Reports have been written. Recommendations have been made. Yet victims and survivors tell us that too many of those recommendations did not result in meaningful change, lessons were not learned, and organisations are still failing to act.

"We are determined to establish the truth about these horrific crimes, understand why children were failed for so long, and ensure that those responsible for protecting them are held properly to account.

"These hearings are not simply about identifying what needs to change. They are about understanding why change did not always follow, who was responsible, and what must now happen to make sure these failures are not repeated."

Zoë Billingham CBE, Panellist on the Inquiry, said:

"For too long there has been a gap between what previous inquiries and reviews identified and what happened afterwards.

"These hearings will examine what action was taken, what progress was made, who was responsible for delivering change and why recommendations did not always result in meaningful improvements.

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"Institutions and organisations will be expected to explain publicly how they responded and what happened where change did not follow."

Eleanor Kelly CBE, Panellist on the Inquiry, said:

"Our National Hearings will hear from victims and survivors first because their experiences and perspectives are at the heart of this Inquiry and its work."

"Their evidence will help shape the questions institutions and organisations must answer throughout the hearings."

Victims and survivors have told us they want answers. Their experiences will help us understand why so many people have been failed and ensure that institutions are confronted with the reality and impact of those experiences."

ENDS

Notes to editors

- The opening phases of the National Accountability Hearings are scheduled for the weeks commencing 14 December 2026 and 11 January 2027, with further hearings planned for March and April 2027.
- [Further information about the National Accountability Hearings is available on the Inquiry website](#). Further details about the venue, media accreditation, access, and other queries will be provided shortly.

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. The Inquiry is chaired by Baroness Anne Longfield CBE, supported by panellists Zoë Billingham CBE and Eleanor Kelly CBE.
- 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 and is 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 Inquiry formally began work on 31 March 2026 and is expected to conclude by March 2029.