

Baroness Anne Longfield CBE
Chair to the Inquiry

Sir Chris Wormald
Cabinet Secretary

By email

9 December 2025

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

As you will be aware, the Home Secretary has today appointed me as Chair of the Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs (“the Inquiry”), established under the Inquiries Act 2005, and set out draft Terms of Reference for the Inquiry (at Annex A), on which I will undertake a period of consultation.

As per the draft Terms of Reference – subject to this period of consultation – the Inquiry will undertake investigations in specific local areas to, *“identify failures in systems and procedures, and failures by individual leaders, in protecting children from grooming gangs within local areas, and make recommendations for immediate and longer-term change and improvement where required.”*

It will also undertake a national review, *“to identify national-level recommendations for change, arising from local reviews”* and *“to identify instances where ... political or institutional accountability mechanisms have failed, and propose actionable recommendations to address and rectify these failures.”*

I write to you now in my position as Chair of the Inquiry on the issue of information and records held by central government and the wider public sector. It is vital that relevant local and national bodies¹ who may be in scope of the Inquiry, including government departments, local councils, health agencies and police forces, are made aware of the need for full transparency and cooperation with the Inquiry, and will be ready to meet their legal obligations to provide relevant records, information and data to the Inquiry as it is requested. This includes ensuring that no material of potential relevance to the Inquiry is destroyed - including emails, text or WhatsApp messages and other communications.

¹ ‘Relevant local and national bodies’ are those with responsibility for the services set out in paragraph 4.5.3 of the draft Terms of Reference of the Inquiry.

The Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs

Since the Inquiry's final Terms of Reference are not yet set, it is necessarily a matter of judgement as to whether material is likely to be relevant to its work. In the meantime, our goal must be to do our utmost to ensure that no line of investigation is curtailed by the premature destruction of files or records that later become required as evidence. Where there is doubt, it should be assumed that material may be relevant and steps should be taken to ensure it is retained and remains accessible.

Once I have a final Terms of Reference, I will write to relevant bodies with a more detailed request for the retention of relevant materials.

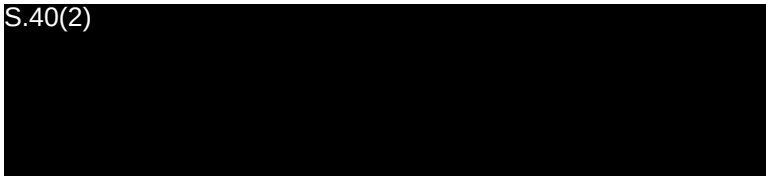
I would be grateful if you could ensure that this requirement is passed on to Permanent Secretaries. I would expect the Permanent Secretaries of the following Government departments to cascade this requirement to their relevant sectors, including local councils, health agencies and police forces:

- the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government;
- the Department for Education;
- the Department of Health and Social Care;
- the Home Office; and
- the Ministry of Justice.

I am also copying this letter to the Permanent Secretary for the Welsh Government for similar cascade as appropriate.

Kind regards,

S.40(2)



The Baroness Longfield CBE

CC: Andrew Goodall, Permanent Secretary for the Welsh Government