

c/o PO BOX 481
Fareham
Hampshire
PO14 9FS

Tel: 02380 478922

Email: npcc.foi.request@npfdu.police.uk

07/05/2026

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NUMBER: 2821/2026

Thank you for your request for information regarding the preservation of records relating to the Grooming Gangs Inquiry, which has now been considered.

Applicant Question:

I understand that you have been contacted by the Permanent Secretary to the Home Office, on 14 January 2026, with a request made on behalf of the Chair of the Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs to (amongst other matters) preserve records relevant to the inquiry (the "Preservation Request").

Please can you provide:

(A) A copy of any communications sent within your organisation in furtherance of the Preservation Request; and

(B) A copy of any communications sent outside of your organisation in furtherance of the Preservation Request (for example, but without limitation, to other parties which you may represent, or, over which you may exercise regulatory oversight).

Please can you confirm that your response to (A) and (B) above comprises the entirety of all communications you have made pursuant to the Preservation Request.

NPCC Response:

The NPCC does hold information captured by your request.

I can confirm that the following information is held:

1. ChiefsNet Post dated 26/01/2026 and 4 attachments:
 - Romeo Stephens Retention Support Note
 - Letter Romeo Stephens Record Retention
 - Annex Draft Terms of Reference for Consultation
 - Annex Letter from Chair of the Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs to Cabinet Secretary

The draft Terms of Reference for Consultation have been withheld in full citing Section 21, Information reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means as it is available online. In wishing to assist you, I have provided the link below:

[Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs: draft terms of reference - GOV.UK](#)

The remaining documents have been subject to minor redaction under Section 23(1) Information supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters and Section 40(2) Personal Information.

In addition to these, three email trails have been captured:

1. RE_ Question on Letter sent by Home Office Permanent Secretary to Gavin Stephens on 14 January 2026
2. FW_ Question on Letter sent by Home Office Permanent Secretary to Gavin Stephens on 14 January 2026
3. Grooming Gang Comms

These trails have been subject to minor redaction under Section 23(1) Information supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters., Section 31(1) Law Enforcement and Section 40(2) Personal Information.

Some additional emails have been withheld in full citing Section 23(1) Information supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters.

In relation to confirming if the above comprises the entirety of all communications you have made pursuant to the Preservation Request, normal standard of proof to apply in determining whether a public authority does hold any requested information is the civil standard of the balance of probabilities. In deciding where the balance lies, the Information Commissioner considers the scope, quality, thoroughness and results of the searches carried out by the public authority as well as considering where appropriate, any other reasons offered by the public authority to explain why the information is not held.

Checks have been made with the NPCC central executive team as well as NPCC Hydrant/CPAI team.

I have undertaken all of the necessary checks in establishing whether information is held which is captured by your request and any necessary steps with regard to retrieval of such information.

Searches have been conducted with the NPCC portfolios and areas that relates to the subject matter and I am satisfied that the search conducted to locate the information that you have requested has been robust.

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Officer & Decision Maker

www.npcc.police.uk

COMPLAINT RIGHTS

Internal Review

Any request for an internal review will be acknowledged and responded to, based on the specific wording of your initial request only.

We ask that any rationale to request an internal review, does not include any requests for new information and ask that these be submitted by separate email. We will acknowledge as a new request and may aggregate to your initial request in compliance with the legislation.

If you are dissatisfied with the response you have been provided with in compliance with the Freedom of Information legislation, you can lodge a complaint with NPCC to have the decision reviewed within 40 working days of the date of this response.

The handling of your request will be looked at by someone independent of the original decision and a fresh response provided.

It would be helpful, if requesting a review, for you to articulate in detail the reasons you are not satisfied with this reply.

If you would like to request a review, please write or send an email to NPCC Freedom of Information, c/o PO Box 481, Fareham, Hampshire, PO14 9FS.

Annex A

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the NPCC, when refusing to provide information by way of exemption in question and (c) states why the exemption applies. In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 this letter acts as a refusal notice to those aspects of your request.

Legislation – Section 16

- (1) It shall be the duty of a public authority to provide advice and assistance, so far as it would be reasonable to expect the authority to do so, to persons who propose to make, or have made, requests for information to it.

Legislation - Section 21 Information reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means

- (1) Information which is reasonably accessible to the applicant otherwise than under section 1 is exempt information.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1)—
 - a) information may be reasonably accessible to the applicant even though it is accessible only on payment, and
 -
 - b) information is to be taken to be reasonably accessible to the applicant if it is information which the public authority or any other person is obliged by or under any enactment to communicate (otherwise than by making the information available for inspection) to members of the public on request, whether free of charge or on payment.

Section 21 is an absolute exemption and there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test.

Legislation - Section 23 Information supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters

- (1) Information held by a public authority is exempt information if it was directly or indirectly supplied to the public authority by, or relates to any of the bodies specified in subsection (3)

This is an absolute exemption and there is no requirement to consider the public interest test.

Legislation - Section 31 Law Enforcement

- (1) Information which is not exempt information by virtue of section 30 is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice -
 - (a) the prevention or detection of crime
 - (b) the apprehension or prosecution of offenders

Disclosure of this information would have the likelihood of identifying specific vulnerabilities, which would ultimately compromise police tactics, operations and future prosecutions. Any information identifying the focus of policing activity could be used to the advantage of terrorists or criminal organisations. Information that undermines the operational integrity of these activities will adversely affect public safety and have a negative impact on law enforcement. Public safety would be put at risk if criminals were able to counteract police tactics.

Any information that could impact or undermine ongoing investigations or any future investigations would enable targeted individuals / groups to become tactically aware of the police capabilities. This would help subjects and avoid detection, and inhibit the prevention and detection of crime.

The NPCC will not disclose information which may hinder the effective management of law enforcement or place staff or officers at risk. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations and in this case providing assurance that the police service is appropriately and effectively managing Freedom of Information requests, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the tactical abilities.

The prevention and detection of crime is the foundation upon which policing is built and the police service have a clear responsibility to prevent crime and arrest those responsible for committing crime or those that plan to commit crime. Disclosure of information captured by this request could directly influence the stages of that process, and jeopardise current investigations or prejudice law enforcement.

Disclosing information which may place the public at risk, or make it easier for crime to be committed cannot be in the public interest.

The police service primary performance indicator is the reduction of crime, and disclosure which has a negative impact on that agenda affects public trust in policing and in this case may make it more difficult to police.

With regard the evidence of harm itself, there is a threshold that requires the predicted issues to be 'more than likely'. In the case of an offender identifying full investigative techniques or gleaning information which would assist in offending behaviour can be difficult to establish and evidence the harm without actually disclosing exempt information. However, the principles are well established in terms of Freedom of Information legislation that to a certain extent the professional opinion of the police must be taken into account.

The NPCC is committed to demonstrating proportionality and accountability however in this case, in this case we believe that the balance falls on the side of withholding the exempt information.

Legislation - Section 40 Personal Information

(1) Any information to which a request for information relates is exempt information if it constitutes personal data of which the applicant is the data subject.

(2) Any information to which a request for information relates is also exempt information if

- (a) it constitutes personal data which does not fall within subsection (1), and**
- (b) the first, second or third condition below is satisfied.**

(3A) The first condition is that the disclosure of the information to a member of the public otherwise than under this Act—

- (a) would contravene any of the data protection principles, or
- (b) would do so if the exemptions in section 24(1) of the Data Protection Act 2018 (manual unstructured data held by public authorities) were disregarded.

(3B) The second condition is that the disclosure of the information to a member of the public otherwise than under this Act would contravene Article 21 of the GDPR (general processing: right to object to processing).

Any information to which a request for information relates is also exempt information if it constitutes personal data which do not fall within subsection (1), and either the first or the second condition is satisfied.

Section 40(2) applies to third party personal data. Any release would breach the data protection principles contained within the Data Protection Act 2018. Section 40(2) has been engaged by virtue of Section 40(3)(a)(i). Any disclosure of withheld information would breach the first data protection principle of fair and lawful processing.

This is an absolute exemption and there is no requirement to apply the public interest test.