

Briefing Paper: Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs

Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP)

Date: 30th June 2026

Audience: Statutory and relevant safeguarding partners across education, local authority services, health, police, voluntary and community sector

Purpose of this briefing

This briefing provides partners with a clear overview of the statutory [Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs](#), including immediate expectations arising from the national preservation notice and what this means for local safeguarding arrangements.

It is intended to support consistent understanding, prompt organisational action, and coordinated partner readiness.

Context and Rationale

The Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs is a statutory public inquiry established under the Inquiries Act 2005, formally set up on 13 April 2026. It has been commissioned in response to national evidence of systemic failures in the protection of children from group-based sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Inquiry is chaired by Baroness Anne Longfield CBE, supported by a multi-disciplinary panel, and will operate for a maximum of three years with full legal powers to require evidence and compel witness attendance.

Its Terms of Reference set out a clear focus on:

- Understanding how children were harmed through grooming gangs
- Examining institutional and multi-agency failures
- Assessing whether opportunities to intervene were missed or ignored
- Making recommendations to prevent recurrence and improve safeguarding systems

The Inquiry will examine evidence from 1 January 1996 to 31 March 2029, alongside wider contextual information where relevant.

A formal preservation notice has now been issued to all relevant organisations, requiring the safeguarding of any potentially relevant material.

What This Means in Practice

All partner organisations must take immediate and proactive steps to ensure compliance with the Inquiry's requirements.

This includes:

- **Preservation of information:** All potentially relevant material must be retained and not altered, deleted, or destroyed. This applies across all formats, including case files, emails, records, recordings and archived material.
- **Suspension of routine disposal processes:** Standard records management and deletion schedules must be reviewed and, where necessary, paused for relevant material.
- **Internal communication and assurance:** , The preservation requirement must be shared with legal, information governance, IT and operational teams, including any third-party providers holding data.
- **Identification of a single point of contact:** Each organisation must nominate a lead contact for communication with the Inquiry.
- **Readiness for future requests:** Organisations should expect requests for documents, data and potential witness evidence, and should ensure records are accessible and auditable.

Failure to preserve relevant material may constitute an offence under the Inquiries Act 2005, including the concealment, alteration or destruction of evidence

Key Messages for Partners

The Inquiry represents a significant national safeguarding process with full legal authority.

- Full cooperation, openness and candour are expected from all agencies.
- The focus is on understanding past failure and driving future improvement, not on individual case review alone.
- Local areas may be subject to targeted investigation, including deep-dive reviews of multi-agency practice.
- The experiences and voices of victims and survivors are central to the Inquiry's approach.

Partners should approach engagement with the Inquiry as a collective safeguarding responsibility, recognising the potential scale and impact of the work.

The Inquiry has direct implications for safeguarding assurance, quality of practice, and system leadership.

Key impacts include:

- **Strengthened expectations on record-keeping and information governance**
Organisations must demonstrate that records are accurate, complete and retrievable.
- **Increased scrutiny of multi-agency decision-making**
The Inquiry will examine how agencies worked together and whether opportunities to protect children were missed.

- **Renewed focus on organisational culture and professional challenge**
This includes how concerns were escalated, responded to, and acted upon.
- **Opportunity for learning and improvement**
Findings and recommendations are expected to inform national and local safeguarding reforms and practice standards.

Engagement and Next Steps

All safeguarding partners should:

- **Confirm compliance with the preservation notice:** Including circulation of the notice, implementation of appropriate controls, and nomination of a lead contact.
- **Review internal readiness:** Ensure governance, audit and oversight arrangements are sufficient to respond to future Inquiry requests.
- **Strengthen partnership visibility:** Maintain clear oversight of child sexual exploitation risks and assurance activity across agencies.
- **Monitor national developments:** Partners should stay informed via:
 - [Independent Inquiry website](#)
 - [Terms of Reference \(GOV.UK\)](#)
 - [Chair and Panel biographies \(GOV.UK\)](#)

Further updates will be shared as additional guidance is issued by the Inquiry, including expectations on evidence submission and engagement.