



Home Office

Home Secretary

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Rt Hon Dame Karen Bradley DBE MP
Chair, Home Affairs Select Committee
House of Commons
London
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20 February 2025

Dear Dame Karen,

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)

Thank you for your letter of 23 January 2025 requesting clarifications following the evidence session on the implementation of the recommendations of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA).

As I set out in my statements to Parliament on 6 January and 16 January, this Government is committed to doing everything in its power to protect children from the horrors of sexual abuse and exploitation. Delivering against the IICSA recommendations is a vital part of this work.

I have set out to the House how we will make progress on three key recommendations - legislating for mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse, taking forward legislation to make grooming an aggravating factor in the sentencing of child sexual offences, and overhauling the information and evidence gathered on child sexual abuse and exploitation. Furthermore, I have committed to providing an update by Easter about how the Government will deliver against the other recommendations within IICSA's final report.

Turning to the specific questions you have raised:

What prompted the meeting between the safeguarding minister, you and Professor Alexis Jay in January 2025? What was the purpose of this meeting and what were its outcomes?

The meeting on 14 January 2025 was scheduled prior to the Christmas period with the purpose of updating Professor Jay on the Government's plans to deliver progress on IICSA's recommendations, with a specific focus on plans to legislate for a mandatory reporting duty. This followed an earlier meeting between the Safeguarding Minister and Professor Jay in September which was an initial discussion on how the new Government could best take this work forward. I joined the Safeguarding Minister for part of the January meeting to demonstrate my personal commitment to making progress on these issues, following which we agreed to maintain regular engagement with Professor Jay to help inform the Government's next steps on addressing the recommendations.

Recommendations from IICSA

What barriers has the Home Office encountered with cross departmental working, specifically in relation to implementing the recommendations in the final report?

The 20 recommendations made in IICSA's final report cover a broad range of important and complex issues, and given the breadth of the recommendations, a co-ordinated cross-government approach is essential. The Minister for Safeguarding has convened an Inter-Ministerial group to discuss the collective Government response, which met on 12 November, and I have been personally encouraged by the commitment from my Ministerial colleagues to working together in delivering an ambitious programme of activity in response to IICSA, and to preventing and responding to child sexual abuse and exploitation more broadly. I will personally be chairing a further meeting of the inter-ministerial group later this month.

Which mechanisms and structures of the civil service have been put in place, or will be put in place, to implement the 20 recommendations from the final IICSA report? What steps is the Home Office planning to take to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the final IICSA report? What external and independent input or oversight will be sought?

The Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Unit in the Home Office, working closely with the Economic and Domestic Affairs Secretariat in the Cabinet Office, is co-ordinating the cross-government approach to addressing the IICSA recommendations and tackling child sexual abuse and exploitation more broadly. As I have set out, this requires a cross-Government approach, and regular meetings are taking place at senior official level to monitor progress.

I have also committed to establishing a victim and survivor panel to ensure that victim and survivor views are central to policy development and delivery of the actions to address the recommendations and tackle child sexual abuse.

I will set out further detail on the process to monitor implementation of the recommendations in my statement before Easter.

What assessment has the Home Office made of costs of implementing the redress scheme? What is the timetable for implementation?

The Home Office has carried out work to understand the potential costs and options for a redress scheme as recommended by IICSA but, as with several of the other recommendations, redress is a cross-government responsibility and not purely the remit of the Home Office. I will provide a further update on the response to this recommendation as part of my broader update on the Government's response to IICSA before Easter.

How is the Home Office planning to engage Professor Alexis Jay during the implementation period?

We are committed to working closely with Professor Jay on the implementation of the recommendations. Since the HASC session on 23 January, officials have already had a further follow-up meeting with Professor Jay to discuss mandatory reporting and we will stay in close contact with her moving forward.

Police response

What steps is the Home Office taking to ensure police forces prioritise investigating child sexual abuse, given there are other government policing priorities?

As I announced in my statement on 6 January, the Government is introducing a much stronger police performance framework for child sexual abuse. This will align with our strategy to drive force-level improvements through tracking local performance in priority areas. I have also announced that all police forces will be expected to implement the recommendations of the HMICFRS review into group-based child sexual exploitation (CSE), including the 'problem profiles' on the nature of group-based offending in their area. I have asked HMICFRS to review progress this year.

I have also asked the National Police Chief's Council to write to Chief Constables in all police forces in England and Wales to urge them to look again at their cases and investigations into group-based child sexual exploitation which have resulted in a 'No Further Action' decision. In doing so, forces will be asked to work with the Child Sexual Exploitation Taskforce to review these investigations and consider pursuing new possible lines of inquiry and reopening investigations where relevant and appropriate. This will be key to reassuring victims, survivors, and communities that no stone is being left unturned in pursuit of justice and in our efforts to see perpetrators behind bars. The Government is providing £2 million additional funding for the Taskforce to support these measures.

What processes is the Home Office using to ensure the standardisation of data collection across police forces in England and Wales?

The Home Office recognises the importance of improving the quality and standardisation of data collection on child sexual abuse across police forces.

One of the key functions of the CSE taskforce is to work with forces to improve data quality. The Taskforce collects data from forces on a quarterly basis and analyses it to provide a holistic view of CSE across the country.

I have also announced that Baroness Louise Casey will oversee a rapid audit of existing evidence on grooming gangs. This review will examine existing data and evidence to uncover the true nature, scale and profile of group-based child sexual abuse offending being dealt with by forces in the UK today.

How is the Home Office ensuring that best practice for policing child sexual abuse is being shared across police forces in England and Wales. Is this information being shared with devolved governments?

The Home Office is investing in a range of work to strengthen law enforcement's capacity and capability to tackle child sexual abuse, including ensuring best practice is shared across all UK police forces.

We are continuing to invest in the CSE Police Taskforce which is improving how the police investigate child sexual abuse and exploitation, with a particular focus on group-based abuse. The Taskforce extends a specific offer of support to any police force with a group-based CSE operation, where they provide advice and recommendations to improve practice and investigations.

The Government has also announced funding to establish a new National Centre for VAWG and Public Protection. This new intelligence-led policing centre will put the experiences of victims of child sexual abuse, rape and sexual offences, domestic abuse and stalking at the heart of police investigations. The Centre will build on existing work to deliver new quality training for police officers across the country in tackling violence against women and girls and child sexual abuse, professionalise public protection work within policing so that police leaders build up the right experience and training in public protection roles, drive up investigative and operational standards across all 43 police forces in England and Wales in tackling these crimes and ensure the latest academic research informs investigative practices.

Public Inquiries

What is the process for choosing the four additional local authority pilot areas in addition to Oldham and what is the process for allocating the £5m pledged to support local inquiries?

We are currently developing options for supporting those local areas interested in undertaking work to better understand local grooming gang issues. We are currently engaging with local areas and developing options for supporting those local areas interested in undertaking new or further work to better understand and tackle local grooming gang offending. Our early engagement work suggests that local authorities would value support from national government on a broader range of initiatives and workstreams on group-based Child Sexual Exploitation, including but not limited to full independent inquiries. We will set out further steps in this area shortly. The Minister for Safeguarding visited Oldham on 7 February to meet victims and survivors, and local leaders to inform the Government's support for a local independent inquiry in that area.

In cases where a local authority does not choose to undertake an inquiry, and there is reasonable evidence of child sexual abuse, what steps is the Home Office planning to take to encourage a local authority to do so?

We will be encouraging all local areas, irrespective of whether they are accessing Home Office funding, to consider their current and historic approaches to tackling Child Sexual Exploitation and to access support from the CSE Police Taskforce as necessary, in addition to undertaking any other work that they consider appropriate.

What consideration has the Home Office given to taking steps, short of legislative change, to enable local inquiries to secure the attendance of relevant witnesses?

As you will be aware, this Government has committed to introduce a 'Hillsborough Law', by the 35th anniversary of the Hillsborough stadium disaster on 15 April 2025, which will place a legal duty of candour on public servants and authorities. I am working with my counterparts in other departments on how this can be best achieved in relation to policing.

I expect all Chief Constables to adhere to the existing statutory Code of Practice for Ethical Policing and the duty of candour within it. This statutory code, issued by the College of Policing, complements the Professional Standards of Behaviour, which require police witnesses to co-operate with inquiries and other forms of investigation. It also places a duty on Chief Constables to ensure candour and openness in the forces they lead.

In 2020, the Home Office introduced a duty of cooperation for individual police officers. This is included in the amended Standards of Professional Behaviour in the Police

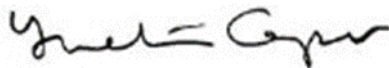
(Conduct) Regulations introduced in February 2020. All police officers have an individual responsibility to cooperate during investigations, inquiries, and formal proceedings, participating openly and professionally in line with the expectations of a police officer when identified as a witness. A failure to cooperate is a breach of the standards, by which all officers must abide, and could result in disciplinary sanctions, including dismissal.

**What is the Home Office mechanism for tracking the implementation of recommendations to all Home Office sponsored statutory inquiries?
How does the monitoring of implementation of this inquiry's recommendations compare to that relating to other statutory inquiries the Home Office has sponsored?
What plans, if any, does the Government have to review the monitoring of institutional responses to public inquiries?**

The Government takes all inquiry reports very seriously and carefully considers their findings and recommendations. We recognise the crucial importance of transparency and accountability, and work is underway led by the Cabinet Office to examine how to more effectively respond to inquiry recommendations and the implementation of those which are accepted.

From a Home Office perspective, significant progress has been made in onboarding sponsored inquiries to MORGAN, the department's central tool for tracking recommendations made by external sources of scrutiny. By July this year we anticipate progress against agreed recommendations from inquiries already published will be tracked centrally via MORGAN, with future inquiries to follow.

Yours sincerely,



**Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Home Secretary**