



8th May 2026

Sir James Mackey
Chief Executive
NHS England

By email
england.contactus@nhs.net

Dear Sir James,

FOR CASCADE TO ALL NHS ENGLAND BODIES

The Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs – Preservation of documents and other material

The Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs ('the Inquiry') is a statutory public inquiry established under the Inquiries Act 2005. The Inquiry's formal setting-up date was 13 April 2026. It is chaired by Baroness Anne Longfield CBE, and I am the Secretary to the Inquiry. The Inquiry must examine issues arising between 1 January 1996 to 31 March 2029 in accordance with its Terms of Reference. Information outside those dates may also be considered by the Inquiry as part of its wider evidence base and final reporting.

Following a public consultation, the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry have been set. A copy is enclosed with this letter. They can also be found at the Inquiry's website:

www.grooming-gangs.independent-inquiry.uk

The Terms of Reference provide that the Inquiry will operate for no more than three years. The Chair therefore expects prompt cooperation from all individuals and organisations engaging with the Inquiry so that its work can be carried out efficiently, effectively and within that timetable.

The purpose of this letter is to notify you formally that any potentially relevant material must be preserved and must not be destroyed, altered, deleted, overwritten, concealed or otherwise disposed of. In due course, the Inquiry may contact you to request documents, data, witness evidence or other material relevant to its investigation. In the interim, it is important to ensure that the Inquiry's work is not undermined by the premature destruction or alteration of material which may later be relevant to its investigations.

Accordingly, please ensure that all potentially relevant material in your custody, possession or control, is preserved and not destroyed. For these purposes, "potentially relevant material" should be interpreted broadly by reference to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.

Potentially relevant material includes, without limitation, correspondence, records, data, recordings, reports, notes, policies, case files, emails, messages or other information, in whatever form held (including paper, electronic, archived, backup or cloud-based form), including confidential, sensitive, personal and special category data.

Please ensure this letter is brought promptly to the attention of your legal advisor(s), records management / information governance team, IT teams, and any other personnel or third-party providers who may hold material in your custody, possession or control or on your behalf, including archived, outsourced or off-site records.

In particular, please ensure that any potentially relevant material is excluded from routine deletion, destruction and records-management policies for the duration of the Inquiry, unless and until the Inquiry confirms otherwise in writing.

Please do not send documents or other evidence to the Inquiry in response to this letter unless and until you are specifically requested to do so. The purpose of this letter is to ensure preservation of potentially relevant material. The Inquiry will provide further directions in due course as to the manner in which material and evidence should be provided.

We would be grateful if you would provide written confirmation to contactus@grooming-gangs.independent-inquiry.uk by 15/05/2026 that:

1. This letter has been circulated internally to the relevant teams and custodians of records;
2. Appropriate preservation steps and any necessary legal or records-management holds have been put in place in respect of material in your custody, possession or control, including material held on your behalf by third parties; and
3. A named point of contact has been identified for any future communication with the Inquiry about preservation, retention or disclosure of material.

I also draw to your attention section 35 of the Inquiries Act 2005 which states, amongst other matters:

(2) A person is guilty of an offence if during the course of an inquiry he does anything that is intended to have the effect of—

(a) distorting or otherwise altering any evidence, document or other thing that is given, produced or provided to the inquiry panel, or

(b) preventing any evidence, document or other thing from being given, produced or provided to the inquiry panel,

or anything that he knows or believes is likely to have that effect.

(3) A person is guilty of an offence if during the course of an inquiry—

(a) he intentionally suppresses or conceals a document that is, and that he knows or believes to be, a relevant document, or

(c) he intentionally alters or destroys any such document.

For the purposes of this subsection a document is a “relevant document” if it is likely that the inquiry panel would (if aware of its existence) wish to be provided with it.

As a public body, you will be familiar with your duties of candour and with the expectation of openness, candour and cooperation when engaging with statutory inquiries. The Chair expects all public bodies and public officials engaging with the Inquiry to approach that engagement in that spirit. The Inquiry also notes the wider policy context, including the Public Office (Accountability) Bill currently before Parliament, which, if enacted, would introduce a statutory duty of candour on public authorities and public officials in relation to inquiries.

If you have any queries about the handling, retention or preservation of potentially relevant information, please contact the Inquiry on contactus@grooming-gangs.independent-inquiry.uk.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and for your anticipated cooperation with the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Alice Bradley
Secretary to the Inquiry

Encl. The Statutory Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs Terms of Reference