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Jackie Irvine
Chief Executive
Care Inspectorate

16 December 2025

National Review of Group Based Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

Dear Jackie,

I refer to your Outline Proposal for Scrutiny, Assurance and Targeted Improvement Support of Group Based Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation and thank you for providing that. I also thank you for consulting Professor Alexis Jay on this proposal, taking into account her substantial experience and considering her advice in developing the approach that has been set out.

Scottish Government Ministers wish to be assured that public protection partners are working together to identify and act appropriately on instances of group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation. We seek an assessment across all Chief Officer Groups of their understanding of the current scale and nature of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Scotland.

Therefore, we formally request that, under section 115 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, the Care Inspectorate and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland lead a joint inspection, working with Healthcare Improvement Scotland, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, and any other scrutiny bodies as appropriate.

We seek to be assured about accountability and assurance mechanisms for Chief Officer Groups (COGs) in Scotland. This will be related to their understanding, response, and improvement in tackling the threats that organised networks represent to the safeguarding of children and young people from child exploitation. The specific areas Scottish Government want scrutiny and assurances on are:

- Strategic leadership, governance and challenge
- Threat assessment, data, intelligence and information sharing
- Early identification, referral & access to protection
- Victim safeguarding, advocacy & support
- Investigation quality, disruption & prosecution
- Looked after children & high-risk cohorts

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- Workforce capability, culture & challenge
- Public protection interfaces

The inspection bodies will work independently of Scottish Government, but Ministers and the Chair of the National Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Group (Professor Alexis Jay) will expect reports at appropriate junctures to update on the progress of the work, and for any matters of significant concern to be appropriately escalated without delay. Any published reports will follow the scrutiny bodies' normal publication protocols.

We request that work formally begins immediately upon receipt of this letter, building upon preparatory work that has been done over the past month. I expect Phase 1 to be commenced immediately with the development of a self-evaluation framework that will be issued to Chief Officer Groups at the beginning of February. Although I expect cooperation from Chief Officer Groups on this important issue, I am reassured that the you can compel public authorities to provide information that you request which will ensure a comprehensive National Review. I welcome your commitment to publish the framework that will be used for Phase 1 at the beginning of February, and your commitment to publish your analysis of this phase in the summer, based on the scrutiny you undertake of the information provided to you. I also welcome your agreement to include case file sampling as part of Phase 2 of the work to commence after Phase 1 has concluded. As you have outlined in your proposal, activity in Phase 2 will be prioritised based on the risk assessment undertaken in Phase 1, with case file sampling being done on areas where concerns exist.

I would be grateful if you could please confirm receipt of this request and provide an indication of when Ministers may expect to see an initial report from your inspectors.

Yours sincerely



JENNY GILRUTH

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