

Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP - Secretary of State for the Home Department

Home Office
2 Marsham St
London
SW1P 4DF

Our ref: DE/O1544-3

20 June 2025

Dear Home Secretary

Re: Forthcoming Statutory Inquiry into Grooming Gangs
Our Clients: The Maggie Oliver Foundation and Mrs Maggie Oliver

We represent The Maggie Oliver Foundation, Ms Maggie Oliver and anticipate that we will act for a significant number of the victims of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation to whom reference was made in the report by Baroness Casey of Blackstock DBE CB of 16th June 2025.

This letter relates to the forthcoming Public Inquiry into grooming gangs. It is not related to our client's Pre Action Protocol letter of 16 June 2025, in respect of the Government's responses to the October 2022 Final Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse ('IICSA'). We ask that you treat this letter separately to the ongoing matter relating to IICSA.

Baroness Casey in her report called for "*a national inquiry co-ordinating a series of targeted local investigations*". Our clients welcome the decision by the Government to act on this recommendation, and the commitment to institute a national public inquiry, on a statutory footing.

In anticipation of that, our client makes the following observations and requests for clarification.

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Urgency

First, our clients share your stated view that these matters are urgent. Our clients urge that every effort is made to establish, commence and conclude the Inquiry and investigation process efficiently and quickly.

With this in mind, our clients ask for an assurance that the evidence and findings of the Augusta Independent Review, Rochdale Review and Rotherham Independent Review will inform and form part of the evidence of the statutory public inquiry.

Survivor centred Inquiry

Baroness Casey highlights the marginalisation of victims and survivors at section 6.4 of her Report:

“It has been survivors, campaigners, whistleblowers, and journalists who have often brought to light child sexual exploitation, not always the public services who are charged with tackling it. Instead, some services have persisted in denying problems through indifference, hostility and the threat of legal action.”

Baroness Newlove (Victims’ Commissioner) welcomed the recommendations from the Casey review and the new national inquiry, but warned that victims cannot wait for its outcome. Baroness Newlove said:

“Victims must remain at the heart of this work. Sharing experiences of child sexual abuse is deeply personal and often retraumatising,

Thousands came forward to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) – often for the first time. Yet years on, too little has changed. We must not repeat those mistakes.

This inquiry must not drag on, and progress must not pause while it runs. Victims need answers – and action.”

Our clients insist that the forthcoming public inquiry will, as the Victim’s Commissioner has said, put victims and survivors at the “heart of its work”. We ask you to confirm that this will be the approach adopted.

Baroness Casey describes the contribution made to her research by individuals and organisations as “vital” and in particular addresses the contribution of our clients in her personal note at pages 11-12:

“Maggie Oliver, of the Maggie Oliver Foundation, kindly brought together a group of survivors. Before meeting them, I had at least a small hope that these women, who had so kindly travelled from far and wide, would reassure me that some progress had been made. I was so disappointed that what I had heard about the treatment of victims in Rotherham, ten years ago, was still being experienced in the present day.”

“I can only thank Maggie Oliver for the support she has offered these women and their families, often at great personal cost.”

Our clients, Maggie Oliver and The Maggie Oliver Foundation will apply for Core Participant status in the forthcoming public inquiry in due course. We recognise that it will be for the Chair to designate core participant status, pursuant to Rule 5 of the Inquiry Rules 2006. However, our clients request assurance from the Government that The Maggie Oliver Foundation, Maggie Oliver and the 10 survivors who met with Baroness Casey (and who made significant contributions to her report) can expect to be granted core participant status, so that they will be at the *“heart of its work”*.

Inquiry Terms of Reference

Applications for core participant status are usually considered by the Chair, after the Terms of Reference (‘TORs’) have been settled. Our clients wish to be consulted on the Terms of Reference at an earlier stage, not least because Maggie Oliver and The Maggie Oliver Foundation have a clear and potentially unique insight into the barriers that victims of CSA and CSE have faced when reporting abuse to the institutions.

Furthermore, Maggie Oliver has identified a number of issues that the Inquiry should consider when making recommendations for future conduct by institutions when faced with allegations of CSA and CSE.

Please confirm that our clients will be consulted on the Terms of Reference.

Points of clarification arising from Baroness Casey’s report

In the meantime, there are some points of clarification which arise from Baroness Casey’s report. Please provide clarity on the following issues, so that The Maggie Oliver Foundation will be in a position to assist the victims in understanding what they can expect from the forthcoming process. Please can you confirm the following:

- (i) The report refers to a national inquiry to be overseen by an Independent Commission. We have assumed that the government will, consistent with its recent announcement, institute an Inquiry under section 1 of the Inquiries Act 2005. Can you confirm that this will be the case?
- (ii) Can you confirm whether the Inquiry will be undertaken by a chair alone, or by a chair with one or more other members? (as per S3 Inquiries Act 2005)
- (iii) Can you confirm the identity of the proposed chair and any panel members, and whether it is proposed that a Judge is appointed to act as the Inquiry chair?
- (iv) Can you confirm the remit of the national police investigation, which is set out at Step 1 on page 150 of Baroness Casey's report?
- (v) Can you confirm, consistent with Baroness Casey's recommendation 12, that this investigation will be "fully resourced".
- (vi) Can you confirm the timeframe for the national police investigation?
- (vii) Baroness Casey states at page 151 of her report: *"There would need to be a process to identify instances and allegations of statutory agencies' failures, and we recommend that the government develops a list of criteria to determine the types and extent of failures which should be used to assess the triggering of a hearing"*. Can you confirm when the Government will develop a list of criteria to determine which cases of institutional failure should 'trigger a hearing'?
- (viii) Can you confirm that our clients will be consulted in relation to the said list of criteria to 'trigger a hearing'?
- (ix) Baroness Casey's report anticipates, at page 151, that the Inquiry will take the form of a number of separate local investigations. Can you confirm the prospective locations of the local investigations, and also confirm that The Maggie Oliver Foundation (which represents victims and survivors throughout the UK) will be consulted as to the locations?
- (x) Baroness Casey's report anticipates, at page 151, that the local investigations will have a 'single appointed legal team'. We understand that a Solicitor to the Inquiry ('STI') is usually appointed in public inquiries as the 'single appointed legal team'. Can you confirm the identity of the proposed STI and provide a contact for that person?

- (xi) Baroness Casey states, at page 152, of her report that there should be “...a charter for victims about what they should reasonably expect from this process as they are once again asked to relive their experiences”. Our clients appreciate that the Inquiry will proceed on the basis that victims should not be retraumatised, wherever possible, through the process of giving evidence. Can you confirm that you will invite submissions on the proposed charter from our clients before finalising or publishing the anticipated charter?

- (xii) Baroness Casey additionally states, at page 152, that ‘Local investigations could commence sooner in areas where the Independent Commission and Home Office agree that sufficient evidence already exists’. Our clients maintain that it is urgent that the Inquiry is not delayed. Can you confirm the areas the Home Office considers that sufficient evidence already exists for the Inquiry to commence within that locality?

- (xiii) Can you confirm when the Inquiry hearings are likely to commence?

Request for Pre-Inquiry funding

Given the exceptional nature and gravity of the issues of Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Sexual Abuse, and organised grooming groups, and the particular vulnerability of survivors both financially and emotionally, our clients expect that the remit of the Inquiry investigations will not be narrow, and thereby exclude the participation and voice of the victims and survivors. Baroness Casey anticipates in her report that victims will be involved in the Inquiry process.

It would be overwhelmingly in the public interest to ensure that survivors and those who represent them can meaningfully participate in the Inquiry, both during its preliminary stages and subsequently as core participants. The facilitation of such participation would ensure equality of arms between victims and survivors and institutions. It is certain that the institutions who failed victims will have unlimited resources to engage with the Inquiry. Victims and survivors must be able to contend with the institutions who allowed them to be harmed.

Funding for core participants will be a matter for the Minister to determine by Notice to the Chair of the Inquiry under s40 (4) of the Inquiries Act 2005. However, as we have set out above, there are a number of key preliminary matters that the Government should invite input from prospective core participants.

We therefore request that the Government agrees to provide funding for legal representation of our clients, prior to the opportunity to apply for s40 funding, to enable our clients to participate meaningfully in the vital preliminary stages of the Inquiry as detailed above in this letter.

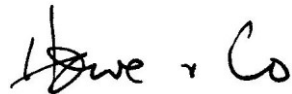
Request for a meeting

Finally, we request an early meeting with the designated senior official of the Home Office, who has been charged with leading on implementation of Baroness Casey's recommendations.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Enright at partners@howe.co.uk to arrange a meeting.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howe + Co". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

DAVID ENRIGHT JP
PARTNER
HOWE + CO SOLICITORS