

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE2208](#): Implement mandatory collection and publication of child sexual offender data, lodged by Joanna Kerr

Introduction

The [petition](#) calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to:

- place a statutory requirement on public bodies to collect statistics on the nationality, ethnicity, immigration status and religion of child sexual offenders
- collate and publish the data annually.

The petition refers to the [National Audit on Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#), noting that it recommended improved data collection. The audit was commissioned by the UK Government and carried out by Baroness Casey of Blackstock. It looked at grooming gangs in England and Wales.

A separate Scottish Parliament petition ([PE2190](#)) calls for an independent grooming gang inquiry in Scotland – to identify and understand the prevalence of child grooming.

Audit of group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse in England and Wales

In February 2025, the UK Government commissioned an audit of group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse in England and Wales. It focused on the operation of grooming gangs. Baroness Casey's [report](#) was published in June 2025.

Recommendations of the report included one relating to a national inquiry into child sexual exploitation in England and Wales. Information on the response to that recommendation, as well as the issue of grooming gangs in Scotland, is provided in the [SPICe briefing on petition PE2190](#).

As noted in the current petition, Baroness Casey's report also recommended improvements to data collection:

“The government should make mandatory the collection of ethnicity and nationality data for all suspects in child sexual abuse and criminal exploitation cases and work with the police to improve the collection of ethnicity data for victims.”

In its [response to the report](#), the UK Government said that it would make it a requirement for the police to collect ethnicity and nationality data of perpetrators in all cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse. This would include cases where there is group-based commercial sexual exploitation. The response added that the Home Office would work with the police to improve the collection of ethnicity data of victims. (These undertakings of the UK Government do not apply to Scotland.)

Data collection in Scotland

A [written response](#) from the Scottish Government to petition PE2190 provided some information on action to improve data relating to child sexual abuse and exploitation:

“Child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE) are often hidden and under-reported forms of abuse. Developing an effective response which prioritises prevention requires a robust understanding of scale and nature. There is currently no comprehensive national data on the prevalence of child abuse in Scotland, therefore we are working to address this issue in way that ensures data is collected in a trauma-informed manner which supports and protects child victims.”

It also noted that Police Scotland was working to align recording systems to capture ethnicity data for suspects.

The issue of data collection is being considered as part of the work being done by the [National Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Strategic Group](#) (established by the Scottish Government). For example, see the [minutes of its meeting](#) on 25 November 2025, under the heading of ‘Data work update’.

A Scottish Parliament debate on [Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) (3 December 2025) included discussion of the importance of having relevant data in this area.

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18 December 2025

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot.

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Published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), an office of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP