

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 11 March 2026
6th Meeting, 2026 (Session 6)

PE2208: Implement mandatory collection and publication of child sexual offender data

Introduction

Petitioner Joanna Kerr

Petition summary Calling 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
- to collate and publish the data annually.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2208>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 21 January 2026](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to consider the petition as part of an upcoming work programme item about the Committee's ongoing work.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage](#).
4. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
5. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 16 January 2026](#).
6. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 123 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

7. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
March 2026

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2208: Implement mandatory collection and publication of child sexual offender data

Petitioner

Joanna Kerr

Date Lodged

14 November 2025

Petition summary

Calling 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

to collate and publish the data annually.

Background information

The Casey Audit recommended a National Inquiry into predominantly Pakistani grooming gangs, where victim profiles were that of majority Caucasian girls. The Casey Audit emphasised that poor data collection inhibited accurate profiling of group based child sex offenders, recommending improved data collection.

The Audit described profiles of the act of grooming employed by gangs and an association of asylum seekers with child sexual exploitation gangs.

Senior Scottish institutional figures have recognised that grooming gangs have existed in Scotland for the last decade.

Action has been promised but nothing has occurred.

Data collection by Police Scotland and other bodies is woefully inadequate. Communication and knowledge are key safeguarding requirements in terms of preventing child sexual abuse.

In over 50% of cases related to sexual crimes, nationality and ethnicity are not recorded. Police Scotland also stated that public disclosure of current statistics revealing the profile of sexual crime data would be too expensive to retrieve.

Publication of this data is particularly important in light of recent asylum policies.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2208 on 21 January 2026

The Convener: PE2208, which was lodged by Joanna Kerr, 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, and to collate and publish the data annually.

As with the previous petition, I will begin our consideration by noting the committee's disappointment at the Scottish Government's delay in providing its response. The response was received only on Friday of last week, which has limited the petitioner's opportunity to provide further evidence; therefore, all we have received recently is the Scottish Government's very late submission.

However, the petitioner provided a written submission to the committee in December, and her written evidence highlights a similar UK public petition, which has now gathered more than a quarter of a million signatures. The submission highlights that police in England and Wales are now expected to collect the ethnicity and nationality data of individuals who are suspected of being members of grooming gangs or perpetrators of other group-based child sexual exploitation.

The Scottish Government's response to the petition states that, given the number of public bodies in Scotland, placing a duty to collect data as set out in the petition would be difficult to implement and disproportionate to their wide and varied roles. The submission notes that, under the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016, following arrest, a person is under no obligation to answer any question apart from their name, address, date and place of birth and nationality. The submission notes, however, that work is under way to align Police Scotland recording systems to capture ethnicity data for suspects. It also notes that criminal justice agencies record information based on operational needs or where there is a legal requirement. Therefore, agencies do not hold coded data on nationality, immigration status or religion unless the specific circumstances of the offences make it relevant for prosecution.

The Scottish Government has highlighted a programme of work that is taking place to improve data collection on child sexual abuse and exploitation. A short-life working group will bring together experts to consider a range of data sources that can be collated and analysed to build a more comprehensive picture of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Scotland.

Do colleagues have any suggestions for action?

Davy Russell: I was thinking that there is a review of other cases, including grooming gang cases, which links in here. Perhaps that review could also consider this issue.

The Convener: I think that we privately explored that before the meeting, Mr Russell. There is not an open consultation at the moment, but there is a website that the petitioner could independently contact in relation to the issue that has been

raised. That is one route. Alternatively, of course, it would be possible for a fresh petition to be brought in the next session of Parliament.

Maurice Golden: I wonder whether this petition might be one that we could keep open for further consideration at a future meeting, if the committee is so minded. There are inadequacies in Police Scotland's work to align the data. As soon as I hear the phrase "working group", it raises a red flag about the possibility that there will be no action. The issue is perhaps worthy of further consideration but, clearly, the committee cannot make a decision until we see the full list of all the petitions that we might want to keep open.

Davy Russell: The other thing to note is that Police Scotland is already amending its databases to take into account information on other types of crime, so it cannot be too difficult for it to adjust its approach further to take this issue into consideration.

The Convener: So, this is another petition that we might want to leave on the short list of petitions that will be held over until the next session, as we think that there are issues here that we would like to be explored. We will defer a decision on whether to close it until we decide whether we feel that that is the appropriate route or whether a fresh petition would need to be submitted in the next session. Are our colleagues content with that suggestion?

Members *indicated agreement.*