

14 July 2026

Susan Hall AM

Chairman of the Police and
Crime Committee

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Dear Chair,

Thank you for your letter of 15 June 2026 regarding the Committee's investigation into grooming gangs in London. The Met welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry and I look forward to giving oral evidence on Wednesday 15 July.

Firstly, I feel it is important to highlight that the term "grooming gang" is interpreted differently by the public, media and policing. The Met follows the nationally agreed policing approach to recording offences. We identify and investigate offending through established child sexual abuse and exploitation frameworks, including group-based and organised child sexual abuse and exploitation. Throughout this response we have therefore used terminology that reflects current policing definitions and recording practices.

1. What definition and criteria does the Met use to describe and identify grooming gang activity in London? How long has this definition been in use?

The way policing records group-based offending is two or more individuals (whether identified or not) who are known to (or associated with) one another and are known to be involved in or to facilitate the offending.

This definition for group-based Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) has been recommended by Operation Hydrant nationally which is developed by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

This includes intra-familial abuse, institutional abuse, peer-on-peer sexual abuse and exploitation, and a range of other offending types.

Fewer than 1% of the total number of live CSAE cases would be cases closest to what the public understand as "grooming gangs", which is why the term is neither accurate nor useful in the context of this review.

This definition has been in use and tracked since September 2025, although it was accepted and in use earlier it was not tracked on crime reports.

2. How does the Met distinguish between:

a. Group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse

The Met defines group-based offending as cases involving two or more suspects who are known to or associated with each other and who are involved in, or facilitate, the offending.

b. Organised child sexual exploitation

Organised offending refers to where individuals work together on a continuing basis with the capability and intent to commit serious crime. Such cases typically demonstrate planning, coordination, control, structure or collective decision-making.

c. Peer-on-peer exploitation

Peer-on-peer abuse refers to children abusing other children. This can include sexual violence, sexual assault, coercive control, exploitation within relationships, initiation or hazing rituals, and other forms of abuse. Peer-on-peer offending forms part of the wider group-based offending picture but is distinct from organised adult-perpetrated exploitation.

d. County lines-related sexual exploitation

County lines and CSE are tracked separately. Where these are both flagged on the same report we would retrieve this, but the Met does recognise the significant overlap between child sexual exploitation and county lines criminality. In such cases, sexual abuse may be used as part of gang hierarchies, however, the primary purpose of these groups is typically another criminal enterprise, such as drug supply, rather than sexual exploitation itself.

e. What may commonly be understood as grooming gangs

The way police records child sexual abuse and exploitation is those categorised by the Met as organised group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation. These involve organised groups acting together in a structured and coordinated manner to facilitate and commit abuse. We would emphasise that this would include a wide range of offending, including familial, institutional and ritualistic abuse, both current and non-recent and therefore should not be conflated with what is commonly described as "grooming gangs".

3. How many grooming gangs or organised groups involved in group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse have been identified in London in each of the last five years?

I will be able to update the Committee tomorrow on the Beaconport reviews.

4. How many offenders and victim-survivors linked to these groups have been identified in London in each of the last five years?

I will be able to update the Committee tomorrow on the Beaconport reviews.

5. Of the above, how many were identified through Operation Beaconport?

Operation Beaconport is still carrying out its review and no cases have yet been returned to the Met of previously closed group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation cases where:

- there were two or more suspects;
- one or more victim-survivors;
- the offending involved contact abuse; and
- the investigation concluded with no further action by police or the Crown Prosecution Service.

The NCA continues to coordinate the national review and will provide further updates in due course.

6. How many specialist officers have been trained to specifically identify and investigate grooming gang activity in London?

The Met has undertaken significant investment in training officers to identify and investigate child exploitation and abuse.

This includes:

- **11,000 officers trained to identify exploitation;**
- **1,200 detectives provided with specialist training** on identifying exploitation and trauma-informed practice;
- all officers within Child Abuse and Child Exploitation teams completing the College of Policing's Specialist Child Abuse Investigator Development Programme; and
- additional specialist trauma-informed training being delivered to officers supporting Operation Beaconport investigations.

As there is no standalone operational category of "grooming gang activity", training is delivered through broader child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation rather than a specific "grooming gang" programme.

This type of crime is abhorrent and the Met remains committed to safeguarding victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation, improving outcomes for victim-survivors, and identifying and bringing offenders to justice wherever possible.

Yours sincerely,



Kevin Southworth
Deputy Assistant Commissioner