



**Baroness Newlove of Warrington**  
**Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales**

Office of the Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, 70 Petty France  
London SW1H 9EX

**e:** [victims.commissioner@victimscommissioner.org.uk](mailto:victims.commissioner@victimscommissioner.org.uk)

The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP  
Home Secretary  
Sent by email: [ps.homesecretary@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:ps.homesecretary@homeoffice.gov.uk)

13<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Dear Home Secretary,

**SUPPORTING VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE  
AND EXPLOITATION**

News headlines over the past two weeks have once again highlighted the horrific details of sexual abuse of children in England by grooming gangs. Such crimes have devastating consequences for victims, and I know we all share the public's concern. The protection and support of these victims must remain an issue of paramount importance for us all.

As Victims' Commissioner, I have witnessed firsthand the courage of survivors who have shared their experiences, as well as the tireless efforts of those working to combat this pervasive issue. While progress has been made in exposing these crimes and amplifying victims' voices, much more remains to be done to ensure justice, support, and recovery for all those affected.

There may be differing views on the specifics and direction of the policies required, but as Victims' Commissioner, I am clear: the interests of victims and survivors must always come first. Over the past week, I have actively sought the insights of those working directly with victims and survivors—individuals with first-hand knowledge whose expertise I deeply value and respect. I am grateful to these individuals and organisations for their time.

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was an extensive and far-reaching undertaking of immense importance. Over seven years, the inquiry engaged with more than 7,000 victims, processed 2 million pages of evidence, and published 61 reports and publications. Professor Alexis Jay's findings are deeply disturbing, shedding light on the immense pain and suffering endured by victims and survivors, as well as the shocking cruelty of their perpetrators.

Despite the inquiry's comprehensive recommendations, it is disappointing that we have made so little progress in implementing them. As you made clear in your welcome statement to the House, none of the 20 recommendations from the independent inquiry into child abuse have been fully implemented. Abuse can be prevented, and those who have suffered can recover, but this will not happen without change.

We now need fresh impetus and decisive action. I welcome the three core elements of your statement to Parliament last week, which set out progress on mandatory reporting, the delivery of a performance framework, and more focus on online abuse and exploitation. I was also encouraged to hear that you will be bringing in the voices of victims and survivors through an advisory panel. It is essential that victims are and remain at the heart of this debate.

The most pressing matter is to make sure those who have taken the brave step to come forward to report have access to therapeutic services necessary for their recovery. In her inquiry report, Professor Alexis Jay recommended the government introduce a national guarantee ensuring that child victims of sexual abuse are offered specialist and accredited therapeutic support. It called for sufficient provision of these services so that children across all parts of England and Wales can access support in a timely manner. The Inquiry also made clear these services should be fully funded, with no eligibility criteria required beyond having been a victim of child sexual abuse.

Yet, I know many survivors are struggling to access such support. Service provision is patchy and inconsistent, leaving many at the mercy of a postcode lottery. At a time when victim services are facing significant pressures and funding shortfalls, it is crucial that the therapeutic needs of this group of survivors are not overlooked.

As recommended by IICSA, I urge the government to guarantee support for child victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. Within this, government must also assess the level of provision needed and ensure these services are adequately funded so victims can access support in a timely way. It is imperative that children get the support they need. There are also large numbers of adult survivors who are unable to access the support they require. I am concerned that recent funding decisions by the Ministry of Justice risk exacerbating this further.

While I understand the pressures on government finances, I am also very aware millions of pounds in court fees remain uncollected each year. By

focusing on collecting just some of these funds, including the victim surcharge intended for victims' services, the government could address the funding shortfall without additional public expenditure, ensuring justice and providing necessary support for victims' recovery and wellbeing.

Supporting survivors is just one part of the picture; we also need to give them a voice. I welcome your announcement that a victim and survivors advisory panel will be established, and I await further information on this initiative. For it to deliver, it is crucial this panel draws from the widest possible range of victims and survivors, including key groups such as the IICSA Changemakers, which itself represents 68 different support groups and countless survivors. Once established, the panel must play a central role in guiding government action. Any decisions made, including on further reviews, will directly affect victims' lives and recovery, so it is essential that their views are actively consulted, considered, and reflected in these decisions.

As part of Professor Alexis Jay's inquiry, IICSA ran a specific investigation strand into child sexual exploitation by organised networks. This ran for two years, culminating in a separate report published in February 2022. The report concluded that police forces and local councils continued to fail victims, and it outlined additional recommendations for reform. This includes a single, unified dataset on child sexual exploitation and child sexual exploitation by gangs.

In the final concluding report for IICSA, Professor Jay, drawing on the extensive evidence reviewed throughout the inquiry, highlighted significant challenges arising from the lack of robust and comprehensive data. She recommended that the UK Government and the Welsh Government address this issue by enhancing the data collected by children's social care and criminal justice agencies concerning child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation. Specifically, she proposed the introduction of a unified core dataset encompassing both England and Wales. I note that this recommendation extends beyond the framework outlined in your recent statement to the House.

If delivered as recommended, this dataset should ensure consistency and compatibility across children's social care, criminal justice agencies, local authorities, and the third sector, capturing key data on victims and alleged perpetrators—such as age, sex, ethnicity—along with factors that increase vulnerability and the contexts in which these crimes occur. This will not only help prevent further abuse but also provide the government with the evidence needed to allocate appropriate funding to essential services. Such a dataset is critical for understanding and preventing future child sexual abuse, and I urge the government to take this recommendation forward in full.

I am clear: perpetrators must be disrupted, pursued, and face justice. Victims and survivors must be protected and supported, and those who failed victims must be held to account. Too many survivors have waited too long for the justice and support they are owed. Now is the time for action, and I look

forward to working with the government to deliver for victims and implement meaningful reform.

Given the high level of public interest in this issue, I will be publishing this letter on my website.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

**Baroness Newlove LLD (hc) DCL**  
**Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales**

CC:

Jess Phillips MP, Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls

Alex Davies-Jones MP, Minister for Victims and Violence Against Women and Girls