

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

Scottish Government written submission, 16 January 2026

Does the Scottish Government consider the specific ask[s] of the petition to be practical or achievable?

The Scottish Government has considered the ask of the petition to place a statutory requirement on public bodies to collect statistics on the nationality, ethnicity, immigration status and religion of those convicted of committing sexual offences against children.

Given the significant number of public bodies in Scotland, placing such a requirement on all of them as the petition asks, would be both difficult to implement and disproportionate to their wide and varied roles and capacities.

It should also be noted that the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 states that 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 arrested person is not required to disclose their ethnicity, immigration status or religion. Recording an ethnicity requires Police Scotland to either rely on the arresting officer's observation or on the arrested person providing this data.

The petitioner states that "*In over 50% of cases related to sexual crimes, nationality and ethnicity are not recorded.*" In reality, Police Scotland has confirmed that in around 50% of the cases the individuals do not have a recognised nationality e.g. the field has either been left blank or it has been filled out using the following information: other, unknown, not stated.

Criminal justice agencies record information based on operational needs or where a legal requirement exists. They do not hold coded data on nationality, immigration status or religion as it is not required unless the specific circumstances of the offences make it relevant to the prosecution of the case.

While the breakdown of data between white and non-white ethnicities can be reliable, the recording of data about more specific ethnicities within these two broad groups may be less accurate given it will be a mix of self-reported ethnicities and ethnicities that are recorded variably at the time of arrest based on observation. This could therefore lead to inconsistencies in the data being collected even if such a statutory requirement was in place.

When individuals are accused and convicted of child sexual offences it is not possible to identify those that relate to 'group-based abuse' without manual checking of the circumstances of each case.

What, if any, action the Scottish Government is currently taking to address the issues raised by this petition, and is any further action being considered that will achieve the ask[s] of this petition?

National Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Strategic Group

Protecting children from harm is an absolute priority for the Scottish Government. Child sexual abuse and exploitation are abhorrent crimes with devastating impacts on the victims and their families. Our recognition of this abhorrent crime is why we formed the expert [National Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Strategic Group](#) which brings together key services and expert stakeholders to inform and strengthen our collective action against this horrendous form of abuse. It is uniquely positioned to assess current challenges and make informed recommendations to tackle child sexual abuse and exploitation so we can ensure we are doing all we can to tackle it through prevention and early intervention.

National Review of group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation

The Scottish Government [announced](#) on 3 December that Ministers will be directing the Care Inspectorate, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland and other inspectorates involved in scrutinising health and education services, to lead an Independent National Review of responses to group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation in Scotland.

The National Review will provide an assessment of local areas' understanding, response, and improvement in tackling the threats that organised networks represent to the safeguarding of children and young people from child exploitation. The National Review will comprise of a combination of self-evaluation work with all local areas in Scotland, alongside independent evaluation of case files. The four inspectorates undertaking the National Review published a joint statement setting out some of the detail on the process. This can be viewed at: [National review of group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation](#).

Activity to improve Data on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

Child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE) are often hidden and under-reported forms of abuse, and developing an effective response which prioritises prevention requires a robust understanding of the scale and nature of the issue.

A programme of work is underway under the National Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Strategic Group to improve data. The Scottish Government's Chief Statistician will chair a Short-Life Working Group bringing together experts to consider a range of data sources that can be collated and analysed to build a more comprehensive picture of CSAE in Scotland.

It is important to review CSAE data captured within other parts of the child protection process, particularly during Interagency Referral Discussions (IRDs, the beginning of the child protection process), Joint Investigative Interviews (the best practice model for interviewing children and young people in Scotland), medical examination and

other protective processes. Through these different sources, partners can gain a fuller understanding of the number of children at risk of or experiencing CSAE, and how these children are responded to and supported. Work so far has shown there is CSAE-relevant data collected across Scotland's child protection processes and the Short-Life Working Group will be assessing how this data can be collated, analysed and shared at a national level.

Police Scotland-led review of group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Following instruction by the UK Government, Baroness Casey published an Audit into group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse in England and Wales in June 2025 which set out findings and recommendations on this issue which included a focus on policing.

In response, Police Scotland have taken forward a series of actions to review their own operations and response to this specific issue. The Police Scotland review is based on identifying cases of possible interest, followed by an initial review by trained police officers and investigators. The review covers cases since 2013 involving one or more victims aged under 18 and two or more suspects where Police Scotland and the Crown and Procurator Fiscal Service made the decision to take no further action. This work closely aligns with similar activity by English and Welsh forces as part of Operation Beaconstyle, established by the National Police Chiefs' Council and the National Crime Agency in response to Baroness Casey's recommendations.

Police Scotland are undertaking further action on these issues and are providing updates on progress to the National CSAE Strategic Group. Scottish Ministers have been assured that if evidence of group-based CSAE is identified, cases will be referred to the National Crime Agency. Should they determine further investigative action is needed, cases would be referred back to Police Scotland.

Police Scotland also provide updates on self-assessment activity being undertaken from both a national and local policing perspective across seven thematic areas: victims and survivors; data analysis; investigations; training and development; partnerships; disruption; and investigative resources. Police Scotland advised that work was also underway to align Police Scotland recording systems to capture ethnicity data for suspects (notwithstanding the challenge outlined above in delivering this consistently across all crimes).

The current system for recording details in relation to those managed under MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) (Police, local authorities, Health Boards and Scottish Prison Service) is owned by the Home Office. They are in the process of developing a new system called MAPPS, and as part of that work consideration will be given to all the data that needs to be held to successfully discharge the identification of and offender management of those managed under MAPPA. That work, led by the Home Office, will provide an opportunity to consider if nationality, ethnicity, immigration status and religion are relevant considerations in that respect.

Child Protection Unit