



[REDACTED]

14 September 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information request: FOI2026/00737

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 15 August in which you requested the following:

Your request:

Please treat this as a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

On 9 December 2025 the Home Secretary announced that UKRI had been commissioned to undertake research addressing gaps in understanding grooming-gang perpetrators' backgrounds and motivations, including ethnicity and religion.

Please provide the final agreed or currently operative research specification, commissioning brief or statement of requirements defining the substantive scope and required outputs of that specific research programme, including any annexes forming part of the operative specification.

I do not require funding applications or bids, reviewer comments, procurement evaluations, pricing information, personal information or general correspondence.

If the scope-setting record bears another title, please provide the final or currently operative record performing that function.

Our response:

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) does not hold information relevant to your request.

In June 2025, Baroness Louise Casey published the [National Audit on Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#)¹. Recommendation 10 of the audit states that:

"The government should commission research into the drivers for group-based child sexual exploitation, including online offending, cultural factors and the role of the group."

Following discussions between senior Home Office officials and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the [Home Secretary announced](#)² on 9 December 2025 that they had "commissioned new research from UK Research and Innovation to rectify the unacceptable gaps in our understanding of perpetrators' backgrounds and motivations, including their ethnicity and religion."

This was followed up in June 2026 by a [written ministerial statement by the Home Secretary](#)³, which stated:

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-audit-on-group-based-child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/independent-inquiry-into-grooming-gangs>

³ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2026-06-16/hcws115>

“The Home Office has commissioned UK Research and Innovation to deliver independent research into the drivers of group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse, including cultural factors, group dynamics and the role of online technologies. This will strengthen the national evidence base, enabling a more detailed understanding of the factors at play and support the development of more targeted and effective interventions. Calls for applications will launch soon.”

Work is ongoing to agree an initial programme of work, and the specification for the research programme remains under development between the Home Office and UKRI. This has not yet been finalised or formally agreed. Therefore, the information you have requested, a final agreed or currently operative research specification, commissioning brief or statement of requirements is not held.

Further information about the research programme, including an initial research call under the programme, is expected to be published in late autumn 2026.

Your rights

If you have any queries regarding our response please do let us know. If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review, explaining which elements of this decision you disagree with and why. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of our response and should be addressed to:

Head of Information Governance

Email: foi@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: www.ico.org.uk.

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see [UKRI's complaints procedure](#)⁴.

Yours sincerely,


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Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
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⁴ <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target>