

Government's announcement on child grooming inquiries: What local authorities need to know

17 January 2025

Commenting on the government's announcement to establish five pilots for locally-led inquiries into grooming gangs, **Stephanie McGarry**, Partner at UK and Ireland law firm Browne Jacobson, said:

"While the possibility of a national inquiry has not yet been ruled out, a locally-led approach to conducting investigations into grooming gangs is a sensible approach given that councils will often have a far better and deeper understanding of the various issues and intricacies within their local areas than any national body.

"This was evident in Telford and Wrekin Council's independent inquiry between 2018 and 2022, with a follow-up review last year revealing the majority of the 47 recommendations set out had been implemented.

"However, given that a recent review by the Thirlwall Inquiry's legal team found that only a small number of recommendations made by numerous public inquiries over the past 30 years have actually been implemented, it's vital that an effective national mechanism is also identified to ensure local investigations result in tangible positive change.

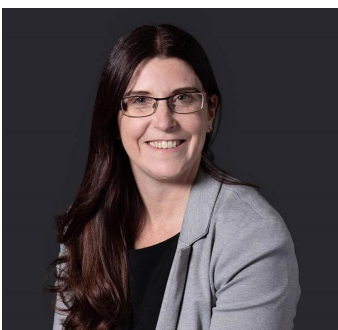
"For local authorities, they should begin preparing as soon as possible for any future mandate from government to conduct their own investigations into child sexual exploitation by ensuring they have plans in place to retain key information.

"With a significant issue highlighted by the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry being a lack of knowledge on where data was stored, councils should identify where relevant data is being stored, ascertain whether it is stored securely and start to compile all the information into one place if possible.

"This data could include children's care records, investigations into child sexual exploitation complaints, safeguarding reviews, communication with local police forces and other agencies, service commissioning documents and a whole range of other information, much of which may be stored as paper records in archives and therefore could require digitising.

"By getting ahead with their data obligations now, local authorities can ensure they are able to react quickly to any national rollout of locally-led investigations."

Key contact



Stephanie McGarry

Partner

stephanie.mcgarry@brownejacobson.com

+44(0)115 908 4113

Related expertise

Services

Child protection and safeguarding in schools	Mental capacity and the Court of Protection	Public law
Investigations and inquiries	Public inquiries	Social care services