| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information ResponseOur reference: FOI 25-2198Responded to: 3rd October 2025 |
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Please, first of all, accept my sincere apologies for the delay in providing a response to your request.

Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

## 1. Recorded Incidents:

## How many recorded incidents of group-based child sexual exploitation (CSE) or grooming gangs have been reported to Police Scotland between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2024?

## For these incidents, please provide a breakdown by the ethnic background of suspects, specifically identifying whether any were recorded as being of Pakistani origin or heritage.

## 2. Investigations and Prosecutions:

## How many investigations into group-based CSE or grooming gangs have been conducted by Police Scotland during the same period (2010–2024)?

## Of these investigations, how many resulted in prosecutions, and what were the outcomes (e.g., convictions, acquittals, or cases dropped)?

## In cases where suspects were identified as being of Pakistani origin or heritage, please provide details on the number of suspects, charges, and outcomes.

Police Scotland records Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) reports, concerns, investigations and cases in a number of ways across a variety of force systems.

However, we do not specifically record what might be deemed ‘group-based’ CSE, and it is therefore our position that all potentially relevant records would have to be individual assessed to determine whether that was a factor.

I therefore estimate that it would cost well in excess of the current FOI cost threshold of £600 to process your request and I am refusing to provide the information sought in terms of section 12(1) of the Act - Excessive Cost of Compliance.

To be of assistance, I can however advise as follows.

All incidents reported to Police Scotland are recorded on our Storm Command and Control system. There is a 'child concern' call type, but there are no flags or markers relating to CSE or group-based CSE specifically.

Concern reports are recorded for all child concern incidents on the Interim Vulnerable Persons Database (iVPD).

IVPD has a marker for CSE, which can be added by the officer if they suspect exploitation may be a factor, but there is nothing specific to group-based CSE.

Our crime recording system has a tag for ‘child sexual abuse and exploitation’, which can be added by the officer if they suspect exploitation may be a factor, but again, there is nothing specific to group-based CSE.

It should be noted the crime system in use was rolled out nationally in January 2024.
For the period prior, legacy arrangements were in place (the crime recording systems of the eight former Scottish police forces) and there was no nationally consistent approach.

Our case recording system (for the submission of standard prosecution reports (SPRs) to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)) has a CSE flag, which can be added by the officer if they suspect exploitation may be a factor, but again, there is nothing specific to group-based CSE.

It should be noted the case system in use was rolled out nationally part way through January 2023. For the period prior, legacy arrangements were in place (the case management systems of the eight former Scottish police forces) and there was no nationally consistent approach.

Based on the above, I can see no way, within the cost limits, of providing you with data based on group-based CSE specifically.

If you were interested in crime data - crime reports with the CSE tag appended - we would be able to provide data for the period since January 2024.

If you were interested in cases submitted to COPFS - SPRs with the CSE flag appended - we would be able to provide data for the period since part way through January 2023.

In fact, that data is already available in a previous FOI response - [25-1229 - Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) stats - 2020-2024](https://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log/disclosure-log-2025/june/25-1229-child-sexual-exploitation-cse-stats-2020-2024-child-abduction-warning-notice-cawn-stats-2014-2025/)

## 3. Data Collection on Ethnicity:

## Does Police Scotland routinely collect and record the ethnicity of suspects in cases of group-based CSE or grooming gangs? If so, please provide details on the categories used (e.g., “Pakistani,” “Asian,” etc.) and any policies governing this data collection.

Police Scotland do routinely collect and record the ethnicity of all suspects, including cases of child sexual exploitation. Please see the table at the end of this document listing the categories used.

There are no Standard Operating Procedures (SOP’s), policies or National Guidance documents held that govern the collection of suspect ethnicities. The information sought is not held by Police Scotland and section 17 of the Act therefore applies.

## If ethnicity data is not consistently recorded, what steps are being taken to address this, particularly in light of recommendations from reports like the 2025 Casey Report?

In Police Scotland’s Data Catalogue for Crime, we have two elements which record ethnicity.  While both are data standards, these standards have not yet been implemented across all our systems. We are currently working on this to improve consistency.

## 4. Knowledge and Awareness:

## What information, reports, or briefings does Police Scotland or the Scottish Government hold regarding the presence of predominantly Pakistani grooming gangs operating in Scotland?

This FOI applies to information held by Police Scotland only, we cannot provide any information held by the Scottish Government.

Unfortunately, I estimate that it would cost well in excess of the current FOI cost threshold of £600 to process your request. I am therefore refusing to provide the information sought in terms of section 12(1) of the Act - Excessive Cost of Compliance.

To explain, to provide any information held would require interrogation of all records held across the force, an exercise which we estimate would be over the 40 hours and cost limit.

However, to assist, we can advise we do not anticipate any information being held that relates specifically to Pakistani grooming gangs.

## Have any specific concerns been raised by police, social services, or other agencies about the potential for such groups to operate in Scotland, and if so, what actions have been taken?

We have interpreted this part of your request as not being in connection to specific incidents reported to Police Scotland (as per Question 1).

I can advise that there have been no concerns raised specifically about the potential for predominantly Pakistani grooming gangs to operate in Scotland.

The information sought is not held by Police Scotland and section 17 of the Act therefore applies.

To assist, in regard to action taken, I can advise that we are aware of the recent published reports into English forces and the recommendations provided, which we are reviewing and implementing into our own existing policies and practices.

## 5. Local Authority Involvement:

## What information is held by Police Scotland or the Scottish Government regarding local councils’ knowledge of or response to allegations of group-based CSE involving suspects of Pakistani origin in Scotland?

This FOI applies to information held by Police Scotland only, we cannot provide any information held by the Scottish Government.

Police Scotland and local authorities have a multi-agency guidance document which provides guidance on all child protection matters including exploitation. It refers to all exploitation and not specifically group-based and not specifically of Pakistani origin:

[National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 - updated 2023](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2023/08/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021-updated-2023/documents/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021-updated-2023/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021-updated-2023/govscot%3Adocument/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021-updated-2023.pdf)

There is also a Child exploitation disruption toolkit available:

[Child exploitation disruption toolkit - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-exploitation-disruption-toolkit)

* Are there any ongoing or completed local inquiries into grooming gangs in Scotland, similar to those in England (e.g., Rotherham, Rochdale)?

No. Police Scotland do not have any ongoing or completed investigations into grooming gangs in Scotland, of a similar scale to those in England.

Information is not held by Police Scotland and section 17 of the Act therefore applies.

## 6. Policy and Training:

## What policies, training, or guidelines are in place for Police Scotland officers to identify and investigate group-based CSE, particularly where there may be concerns about cultural or ethnic sensitivities?

CSE training is included in numerous courses and training packages and covers all aspects of exploitation. It does not focus on ethnicity of suspects, rather all persons suspected of exploiting children.

CSE is included in the core probationary training program, which is delivered to officers as part of their 12-week mandatory initial training cohort at the Scottish Police College.

Recently, bespoke upskilling training was provided to probationary training staff by our national child protection team as it was recognised the staff needed more background knowledge to better their training expertise, in particular to cover key elements of child protection instances and procedures, expanding baseline awareness of Child Criminal Exploitation/Child Sexual Exploitation (CCE/CSE) to better the training experience and outcomes for probationers and long-term our frontline officer response.

In addition to this, the core aspects of child protection, including CCE/CSE is included within the following specialised national training courses:

* National Child Protection Course
* National Child Protection Inter-Agency Referral Discussion Course
* Advanced Investigators Course
* Sexual Offences Liaison Officers Course
* National Ports Procedure Course

Our dedicated child exploitation intranet page, accessible to all officers, is furnished with links to national CCE/CSE resources available for use and guidance including the Scottish Government Guide for Practitioners and the UK Government CSE Toolkit, as well as links to useful partner agencies resources.

## Have any lessons been learned or applied from high-profile grooming gang cases in England (e.g., Rotherham, Rochdale, Telford) to improve detection and prevention in Scotland?

Police Scotland are aware of the high-profile cases mentioned above, and we are aware of the recent published reports into these forces and the recommendations provided, which we are reviewing and implementing into our own existing policies and practices.If you require any further assistance, please contact us quoting the reference above.

You can request a review of this response within the next 40 working days by email or by letter (Information Management - FOI, Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH). Requests must include the reason for your dissatisfaction.

If you remain dissatisfied following our review response, you can appeal to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner (OSIC) within 6 months - [online](https://www.foi.scot/appeal), by email or by letter (OSIC, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, KY16 9DS).

Following an OSIC appeal, you can appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

This response will be added to our [Disclosure Log](http://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log) in seven days' time.

Every effort has been taken to ensure our response is as accessible as possible. If you require this response to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know.

## Ethnicity Categories

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| --- |
| African - African Other |
| African - African Scottish or African British |
| Asian - Asian Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British |
| Asian - Asian Other |
| Asian - Bangladeshi |
| Asian - Chinese |
| Asian - Chinese Scottish or Chinese British |
| Asian - Indian |
| Asian - Indian Scottish or Indian British |
| Asian - Pakastani Scottish or Pakastani British |
| Asian - Pakistani |
| Caribbean or Black - Black |
| Caribbean or Black - Black Other |
| Caribbean or Black - Black Scottish or Black British |
| Caribbean or Black - Caribbean |
| Caribbean or Black - Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British |
| Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups |
| Other Ethnic Group - Arab Scottish or Arab British |
| Unknown |
| White - English |
| White - Gypsy/Traveller |
| White - Irish |
| White - Northern Irish |
| White - Other British |
| White - Polish |
| White - Scottish |
| White - Welsh |
| White - White Other |
| Zz African |
| Zz Any Mixed B'ground |
| Zz Any Other B'ground |
| Zz Black British/Africa |
| Zz Black British/Cbean |
| Zz Blck Scot/Other Blck |
| Zz Mixed White/Asian |
| Zz Mxd Wht/Blck Cbean |
| Zz Mxd Wht/Blck/African |
| Zz Not Avail-Intell |
| Zz Not Stated |
| Zz Other Afri/Carib/Blk |
| Zz Other Asian Bground |
| Zz Other Black Bground |
| Zz Other Ethnic Group |
| Zz Other Mixed |
| Zz Other South Asian |
| Zz White British |
| Zz White British |
| Other Ethnic Group - Arab |
| Other Ethnic Group - Arab Scottish or Arab British |
| Unknown |
| White - English |
| White - Gypsy/Traveller |
| White - Irish |
| White - Northern Irish |
| White - Other British |
| White - Polish |
| White - Scottish |
| White - Welsh |
| White - White Other |
| White - North European |
| White - South European |
| Black |
| Unknown |
| Chinese, Japenese or South East Asian |
| Asian |
| Middle Eastern |