

Date: 16 December 2025

Jenny Gilruth MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Dear Cabinet Secretary

### **National Review of Group Based Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation**

I refer to, and acknowledge receipt of, your letter dated 16 December 2025 under terms of section 115 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 formally requesting His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland to jointly lead an inspection with the Care Inspectorate, and working with Healthcare Improvement Scotland, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, and any other scrutiny bodies as we deem appropriate, to inspect how public protection partners are working together to identify and act appropriately on instances of group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation, and assess Chief Officer Groups level of understanding of the current scale and nature of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Scotland.

I note the specific areas Scottish Government seeks scrutiny and assurance on, namely,

- Strategic leadership, governance and challenge.
- Threat assessment, data, intelligence and information sharing.
- Early identification, referral & access to protection.
- Victim safeguarding, advocacy & support.
- Investigation quality, disruption & prosecution.
- Looked after children & high-risk cohorts.
- Workforce capability, culture & challenge and
- Public protection interfaces.

I will ensure these areas are core components of our joint inspection and that we will report back under these terms.

Our joint work will begin work immediately and we will be taking a phased approach as set out in our outline proposal. We undertake to provide updates on the progress of the inspection to Scottish Ministers and Professor Jay, in her capacity as Chair of the National Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Group, as appropriate; whilst ensuring our independence from Scottish Government and the National Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Group is maintained throughout.

Phase one of the inspection will commence immediately and will evaluate the understanding of organised networks in local council areas, child sexual exploitation, and criminal exploitation of children more generally, and its impact on local communities. The framework for this phase will be published in Spring 2026, and it's our intention to complete this part of our joint inspection within six months. At this point, we will publish a report in accordance with our standard reporting practice. That said, I wish to provide you, Members of the Scottish Parliament, victims and survivors and the wider public with every assurance, that should our joint work establish any immediate causes for concern, these matters will be escalated without delay and there will be a requirement for the statutory bodies to act on the information we provide.

Should you or your officials require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robbie Pearson', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Robbie Pearson**  
Chief Executive  
Healthcare Improvement Scotland