



**Information Governance Team**

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Dear Sir/Madam

**Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)**

**Request ID: FOI734796284**

Thank you for your request for information relating to Grooming gangs and taxi / private hire licenses .

You have requested the following information:

**Under the Freedom of Information Act, and taking into account Baroness Casey's report (on group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse ('grooming gangs') National Audit on Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse - GOV.UK), can you please answer the following questions:**

**1. Has the Local Authority, since 2010, conducted or participated in any investigations into group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse within its area? If so, please provide details of these investigations, including dates, scope, and outcomes. Does the Local Authority hold any recorded plans or policies for future investigations into group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse to ensure child safety?**

Since 2010, Coventry City Council has both led and participated in a number of multi agency investigations into group-based child sexual exploitation (CSE) and abuse within the city.

Between 2013–2017, the Local Authority worked with police on multiple operations into organised CSE networks, contributing case intelligence, safeguarding children, and supporting prosecutions.

In 2017, Coventry services were involved in the multi agency response to the case that led to the convictions of individuals for rape and exploitation offences.

From 2018 onwards, the Horizon Team has coordinated ongoing case reviews, audits, and disruption activity specifically addressing group based exploitation, with learning embedded into practice.

**Independent Reviews and Audits:** The Local Authority has also commissioned and contributed to local and national reviews into CSE (including Serious Case Reviews and learning reviews), ensuring findings informed practice improvements. Regular child-level case audits are undertaken in partnership with safeguarding boards to assess risks of exploitation, including any links to group based abuse.

**Future Planning:** While individual investigations are led by the Police, the Local Authority holds recorded strategic plans to ensure preparedness and effective response.

The Exploitation Strategy (2023–2026) sets out Coventry's approach to identifying, disrupting, and responding to group-based exploitation.

The Local Authority also participates in regional problem-profiling work through the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership, ensuring emerging patterns of group based offending are tracked and investigated.

Regular multi-agency disruption meetings are embedded in practice to enable swift action where risks are identified, with clear escalation pathways to police led investigation where required.

Through these measures, Coventry City Council has ensured that group based child sexual exploitation is recognised as a continuing safeguarding priority, with robust partnership arrangements in place for both current and future investigations to protect children.

**2. What specific measures has the Local Authority implemented to protect children in public care, particularly those in children's homes, from group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse, especially in relation to their use of taxi or private hire vehicles? Please provide details of any policies, training, or monitoring systems introduced to enhance their safety.**

Coventry City Council has implemented a wide range of targeted measures to protect children in public care, particularly those living in children's homes, from the risks of group based child sexual exploitation (CSE) and abuse, including risks associated with the use of taxis and private hire vehicles.

### **1. Robust Licensing Safeguards**

a. The Council has worked closely with Licensing colleagues to ensure that all taxi and private hire drivers licenced in Coventry are subject to rigorous vetting processes, including enhanced DBS checks, mandatory safeguarding training, and ongoing compliance monitoring.

b. Specific conditions have been placed on licences requiring drivers to complete child safeguarding and CSE awareness training, with refresher modules embedded to maintain vigilance.

### **2. Training and Awareness for Staff and Carers**

- a. All staff in children's homes, foster carers, and social workers receive training on CSE, contextual safeguarding, and the specific risks posed through the use of taxis/private hire vehicles.
- b. Children's homes staff are trained to closely monitor the movement of children and young people, challenge unknown taxi use, and escalate concerns immediately through safeguarding procedures.

### **3. Policy and Practice Frameworks**

- a. Clear guidance is in place requiring children's homes to use only approved taxi providers who meet the Council's safeguarding standards.
- b. Homes maintain logbooks of all taxi journeys, recording the provider, driver, and reason for travel. Any unauthorised or concerning use of taxis is treated as a safeguarding incident.
- c. Safety planning for children identified as at risk of exploitation includes restrictions and monitoring around transport arrangements, ensuring that only trusted and verified adults are permitted to transport them.

### **4. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements**

- a. The Horizon Team, Coventry's specialist multi agency child exploitation service, monitors risks related to transport, taxis, and locations linked to exploitation. Intelligence is regularly shared with the police, licensing, and children's homes to disrupt potential risks and perpetrators.
- b. Regular exploitation risk panels review children at risk, ensuring that patterns such as frequent taxi use are identified, analysed, and acted upon swiftly.

### **5. Monitoring and Assurance**

- a. Ofsted-registered children's homes in Coventry are required to evidence how they safeguard children from CSE, including risks related to taxis. Compliance is reviewed through Regulation 44 independent visitor reports, internal audits, and oversight by senior managers.
- b. The Licensing and Safeguarding Children's Partnership receive regular updates on emerging risks, trends, and the effectiveness of taxi safeguarding measures.

In summary, Coventry has established a robust framework of policy, training, partnership, and monitoring arrangements that specifically address the risks of CSE in relation to taxis and private hire vehicles. These measures ensure that children in public care are safeguarded proactively, risks are disrupted, and intelligence is shared effectively across the partnership to protect the most vulnerable young people.

**3. Following Baroness Casey's National Audit (June 2025), which highlighted the use of taxis in trafficking victims of group-based child sexual exploitation, has the Local Authority conducted any audits, reviews, or investigations into the taxi and private hire licenses it has issued since 2015? If so, please provide details, including dates, scope, and findings.**

Coventry City Council has undertaken targeted reviews and audits in response to national

concerns about the use of taxis in child exploitation.

**Licensing Audits:** Since 2015, the Licensing Authority has carried out regular reviews of taxi and private hire license holders, ensuring compliance with enhanced DBS checks, mandatory safeguarding training, and adherence to Coventry's licensing conditions. The most recent audit was completed in 2023, focusing specifically on safeguarding and exploitation risks. Findings confirmed that all active licence holders had up-to-date checks and training in place.

**Child Case Audits:** Children's Services have completed thematic audits of child exploitation cases (most recently in 2024), which reviewed risk indicators including the use of taxis/private hire vehicles. These audits found no systemic issues with licensing compliance but highlighted the importance of ongoing staff vigilance and partnership intelligence sharing, which has since been strengthened through the Horizon Team and the Exploitation Risk Panels.

**Ongoing Monitoring:** Regular joint reviews between Licensing, Children's Services, and West Midlands Police continue to monitor emerging risks. Where any concerns about individual drivers or companies arise from casework or intelligence, immediate investigations and licence reviews are undertaken.

Details of audit findings:

#### **Licensing Audits and Reviews:**

2016 Coventry Licensing Safeguarding Review examined all taxi/private hire licensing conditions to strengthen requirements around safeguarding, DBS checks, and mandatory training.

- 2019 Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Audit – focused on compliance with Coventry's safeguarding conditions; confirmed that 100% of drivers held enhanced DBS checks and had completed the mandatory safeguarding awareness training.

- 2023 Licensing Compliance Review – audited active licences against safeguarding standards; findings showed continued compliance, with recommendations to enhance intelligence sharing with Children's Services and West Midlands Police.

#### **Children's Case Audits (Exploitation):**

- 2018 Thematic Audit on Child Sexual Exploitation – reviewed 25 cases of children at risk of exploitation, including analysis of indicators such as use of taxis/private hire vehicles. No systemic licensing issues were identified, but actions were taken to improve practitioner awareness.

- 2021 Multi-Agency Exploitation Audit – joint review of 30 cases across Children's Services, Police, and Health. Highlighted improved disruption activity and reinforced the need for regular cross-checks with Licensing.

- 2024 Horizon Team Child Exploitation Audit – assessed practice in 20 recent cases; confirmed safeguarding pathways were being followed and risks linked to taxis were appropriately managed.

**Ongoing Monitoring:** Coventry maintains joint monitoring arrangements between Licensing, Children's Services, and West Midlands Police, including quarterly exploitation risk reviews. Where

concerns about individual drivers or companies are identified through casework or intelligence, immediate investigations and licence reviews are undertaken.

In summary, Coventry has undertaken both formal licensing audits and child case audits since 2015. The findings have consistently strengthened safeguards, confirmed compliance with licensing standards, and ensured children are protected from exploitation risks associated with taxis and private hire vehicles.

**4. How many taxi or private hire drivers licensed by the Local Authority have been convicted of offenses related to group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse (e.g., rape or child trafficking) since 2010? Please provide the number of convictions known to the Authority, distinguishing between those identified before and after licensing.**

None that the Council are aware of.

**5. What percentage of taxi and private hire licenses issued the Local Authority, as of the latest available data, are held by individuals recorded as Pakistani origin? Please provide demographic data on the ethnic backgrounds of all currently licensed taxi and private hire drivers, using standard UK government ethnicity categories.**

This information is not held by the Council and therefore we are informing you as per Section 1(1) of the Act.

**6. What specific actions has the Local Authority taken since June 2025, in response to Baroness Casey's National Audit on Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, to enhance child safety in relation to taxi and private hire vehicles? Please provide details of policies, training, or other measures implemented.**

Coventry Local Authority set up a working group in addition to:

- Introduction of taxi cameras which must be capable of capturing every passenger and driver from the chest upwards.

- Setting out a clear definition of a 'fit and proper person'.

- Proper training and a knowledge test on 3 year refresh.

- Three yearly driver refresher training brought in, in August 2019 for all licensed hackney carriage and private hire drivers

- A 100% pass mark requirement for the safeguarding test.

- Using novel legal approaches to ensure those accused of serious sexual offences have their licenses repealed if the evidence available meets the civil threshold.

**7. What mechanisms are in place for the public or authorities to report concerns about taxi or private hire drivers licensed by Wolverhampton City Council? Please provide details on the reporting process and how such reports are investigated and resolved.**

The public or Local Authorities / public bodies can make a complaint to Coventry taxi licensing about any licensed driver should they have a concern. This process is held on Coventry City Council's website.

**8. Has the Local Authority conducted any audits or reviews of its taxi and private hire licensing practices, specifically in relation to child safety, since the publication of Baroness Casey's National Audit in June 2025? If so, please provide details, including dates and outcomes.**

Please see answer to Question 4.

**9. What steps has the Local Authority taken since June 2025 to raise public awareness about the risks of child sexual exploitation in relation to taxi and private hire vehicles? Please provide details of campaigns, materials, or initiatives.**

There is no specific action taken since June 2025 given the robust measures that are already in place.

**10. Has the Local Authority engaged with local communities, particularly those affected by group-based child sexual exploitation, since June 2025 to understand their concerns and incorporate feedback into taxi and private hire licensing policies? Please provide details of engagement activities and policy changes.**

As above.

**11. Apart from CCTV, what other technological measures has the Local Authority implemented or considered since June 2025 to enhance safety in taxi and private hire vehicles, such as GPS tracking or panic buttons? Please provide details of any implemented or proposed measures.**

This is being considered by the working group referenced in answer 6.

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If you are unhappy with the handling of your request, you can ask us to review our response. Requests for reviews should be submitted within 40 days of the date of receipt of our response to your original request email: [infogov@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:infogov@coventry.gov.uk)

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our review, you can write to the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or email [icocasework@ico.org.uk](mailto:icocasework@ico.org.uk).

Please remember to quote the reference number above in your response.

Yours faithfully

**Information Governance**