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Blue Monday

John Terry retires from England team
Sport and the game



Police files reveal vast child protection scandal

Exclusive Confidential papers show a decade of abuse in South Yorkshire

Andrew Norfolk
Chief Investigative Reporter

Confidential police reports and intelligence files that reveal a hidden truth about the sale and extensive use of English children for sex are exposed today.

They show that for more than a decade organised groups of men were able to groom, pimp and traffic girls across the country with virtual impunity. Offenders were identified to police but not prosecuted.

A child welfare expert, speaking under condition of anonymity, said that agencies' reluctance to tackle such street-grooming networks was "the biggest child protection scandal of our time".

The Times has published several articles about a pattern of crimes across northern England and the Midlands involving groups of men, largely of Pakistani heritage, and the sexual abuse of white girls aged from 12 to 16.

We can now reveal evidence from more than 200 restricted-access documents which show that, in one area, police and child protection agencies have held extensive knowledge of this crime model for ten years, yet have never publicly acknowledged its existence.

The internal police and social services correspondence, research papers, intelligence reports and case files are a detailed history of alleged child sexual exploitation in South Yorkshire since 2000, focusing on Rotherham. They include a confidential 2010 report by the police intelligence bureau warning that thousands of such crimes were committed in the county each year.

It contains explosive details about the men responsible for the most serious, co-ordinated abuse. "Possibly the most shocking threat is the existence of substantial and organised offender networks that groom and



TOM PILSTON FOR THE TIMES

This girl identified the five men who allegedly abused her to South Yorkshire police. No one was then prosecuted

exploit victims on a worrying scale," the report says. "Practitioners throughout the force state there is a problem with networks of Asian offenders both locally and nationally. This was particularly stressed in Sheffield and even more so in Rotherham, where there appears to be a significant problem with networks of Asian males exploiting young white females." Such groups are said to have trafficked South Yorkshire child victims "to many other cities, including Bristol, Manchester, Birmingham, Bradford and Dover".

Another confidential 2010 report for the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board, noted that such crimes had "cultural characteristics... which are locally sensitive in terms of diversity".

It said: "There are sensitivities of

Town where girls were betrayed, twice

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ethnicity with potential to endanger the harmony of community relationships. Great care will be taken in drafting... this report to ensure that its findings embrace Rotherham's qualities of diversity. It is imperative that suggestions of a wider cultural phenomenon are avoided."

Alleged crimes for which no one was prosecuted include:

- Fifty-four Rotherham children were linked to sexual exploitation by three brothers from one British Pakistani family, 18 identifying one brother as their "boyfriend" and several allegedly made pregnant by him;
- A 14-year-old girl from a loving, supportive family was allegedly held in a flat and forced to perform sex acts on five men, four of them Pakistani, plus

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Town where girls were betrayed — first by groomers, then by the police

A school warned parents, paperwork was filed, and yet young victims were treated like bad girls, reports **Andrew Norfolk**



Adults commit sex offences against a child. Police and social services are informed. They respond immediately because they have a duty to protect the weak and vulnerable. Or so one might think.

It was a different story if you lived in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, for most of the past 16 years and were a young teenage girl who fell prey to any one of numerous groups of men who groomed, abused and then cast you aside when they were finished. If that happened, police were likely to treat you as a naughty girl.



'An investigation by *The Times* prompted the Government to order a national inquiry'

The men who flirted with you, gave you car rides, cigarettes, drugs and alcohol before using you for sex and sharing you among their friends and relatives seemed untouchable. More than 200 confidential documents seen by *The Times* offer damning evidence of an institutional failure to tackle an epidemic of organised sexual exploitation in Rotherham. Similar crime networks have flourished during the past ten years across the North and Midlands, from Bradford, Birmingham and Blackburn to Derby, Manchester and Rochdale. A common pattern was that the men turning the abuse of young teenage girls into a collective activity were predominantly from a small sub-section of British Pakistani society. Most identified child-sex offenders in Britain are white men, acting alone. The extent to which police and child welfare professionals allowed concerns about racial sensitivities to influence their work is disputed, but it was not as though authorities in Rotherham received short notice of what was happening. As long ago as 1996, a social services investigation uncovered concerns that girls were being coerced into "child prostitution" by a small group of men who regularly collected them from residential care homes. Two years later, 70 girls from the town were said to be involved. The findings led to a one-year, Home Office-funded research project on the "detection, investigation and prosecution of offenders involved in sexual exploitation in Rotherham". While it was under way in 2000-2001, the headmaster of a Rotherham secondary school sent a letter to parents warning that some of his pupils were being used by adults for sex. "Shocking facts are beginning to emerge regarding the systematic sexual exploitation of 13 to 16-year-old girls in our care," he wrote. The project's report was never published. It included ten case studies, all of them white British girls, and found that "the men linked to the majority of

the girls were members of one Asian family". Taxis were used to target and take the victims to addresses in Rotherham and further afield. Takeaway shops featured prominently. Girls were also "collected from outside schools, bus and train stations, residential homes and homeless projects". There was "a great deal of data concerning the activities of these men" yet none was charged with any sex offence. The report was written ten years ago. It should have acted as a wake-up call but for the next seven years nothing

give statements, police seemed to feel that there was nothing they could do. One report noted: "The view expressed by some police officers was that if the young people were not prepared to help themselves by giving evidence then no further action would be contemplated against their abusers." Even when girls were brave enough to come forward, naming the men responsible for sex crimes, charges did not follow. One child gave two lengthy, videotaped police interviews in 2003, before and after her 14th birthday. No one was prosecuted. A few miles away in Sheffield, South Yorkshire Police launched an investigation in 2007 into a network of Iraqi men aged 20 to 45 who were targeting girls in residential care. The youngest victim was 12. Convictions, prison sentences and deportations followed. An internal police report noted: "The offenders were well organised. Girls were approached and groomed by the men, coming to think of them as boyfriends. "Once relationships were cemented, the situation changed. The offenders used violence to control the girls, who were then trafficked around the country, forced to have sex with other Iraqi men and used as prostitutes." It took a further two years before police in Rotherham mounted their first and to this day their only successful investigation into group offenders. Eight British Pakistani men were charged. In 2010, five of them were jailed for a total of 32 years. Operation Central was challenging and resource intensive but it produced results. At least two subsequent police investigations in Rotherham have flourished. Both involved large groups of men allegedly responsible for horrific levels of abuse and exploitation. No charges were brought.

A July 2010 independent review for Rotherham's safeguarding children board, which was not made public, described the Operation Central offences as "child sexual exploitation at the top end of seriousness". It added: "The trauma and potentially life-changing consequences suffered by these children are unimaginable." Each of the four victims, aged from 13 to 16, suffered relentless sexual abuse over months and even years before a criminal investigation was launched. They complained that "the authorities did not understand what was happening to us, either because they did not believe us or because they could not comprehend that something as serious as this was possible". The grooming and abuse was said to



Girls were groomed for sexual abuse in Eastwood, Rotherham

A 14-year-old was found under a bed, drugged. She was arrested



Incidents of child sexual exploitation in South Yorkshire, 2000-2010, identified in police intelligence and local authority documents and for which, it is understood, no one was prosecuted include:

- Intelligence was given to police via other girls, a school and a social worker that a 13-year-old girl was regularly sitting on an electricity box at the entrance to a park, waiting to be "picked up by Asian men in cars and taxis and taken to have sex with males".
- A British Pakistani man aged 22 was found in a car with a bottle of vodka and a 12-year-old white girl. Both were arrested and held in police cells on suspicion of car theft. Disturbing photographs of the child were found on the man's mobile phone. He was not prosecuted.
- A girl's mother copied the names, numbers and text messages of 177 Asian men, including a police officer, from

- her daughter's mobile phone after the 13-year-old went missing for five days. Police said that using the information would infringe the girl's and the men's human rights.
- Two terrified girls, who were dragged into a car and driven to Bristol to be used for sex as part of a drugs deal, phoned support workers to seek help. Officers from Avon and Somerset Constabulary rescued them and returned them to Sheffield on a train. South Yorkshire Police did not question them about the incident.
- Two girls aged 14 and 15 were allegedly being sold for sex by a man known to police for criminal activities including pimping. He charged £10 a time to Asian men

- who collected the girls in cars and taxis, returning them to their home neighbourhood after each sexual encounter.
- Police went to a house outside which a father was demanding the release of his daughter, who was inside with a group of British Pakistani adults. Officers found the girl, 14, who had been drugged, under a bed. The father and his daughter were arrested for racial harassment and assault respectively. Police left, leaving three men at the house with two more girls.
- Five girls regularly visited a takeaway food outlet and at least two of them, aged 13 and 15, allegedly had sex with workers in the toilets and in a flat above the premises.

after being found with an offensive weapon. Despite the presence of a group of men in the house and drugs having been given to the young woman, none of the men present was questioned. One young woman had an association with a man 20 years her senior. After having been missing for over a week, she was found in his car under the influence of drugs. Sexual intercourse had taken place. She was 14. The man was arrested for possession of drugs."

Sexual Exploitation, Drug Use and Drug Dealing

South Yorkshire Police, August 2003
"One 12-year-old girl described being taken to a hotel by some men, and watching while her 14-year-old sister had sex with them. One young girl was doused in petrol as a threat against reporting sexual offences. Some Asian men have been reported driving around Kimberworth, picking young girls up. Men from Bradford, Sheffield and Chesterfield are involved. Girls in Leeds also know the main perpetrators. They start grooming girls as young as 12 and are pimping them by age 13 or 14. Rape, multiple rapes and gang rape are often part of the grooming process. They have been operating for years. People in the community are too frightened to speak out. They do not talk about them within their own cultural community."

Report of Home Office-funded study Rotherham research project, 2002
"In two cases, police officers responded to missing person reports but left the young women with the suspected abuser, concluding she was safe. When the parents attempted to intervene, they were threatened with arrest and charged for breach of the peace. One young woman (aged 15) was arrested

Lessons Learned Report — Operation Central Report to Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board, 2010
"(One of the victims), aged 13, was found by

the police at 3am on Monday 7 October 2008 in a semi-derelect house alone with a large group of adult males. She was drunk, the result of having been supplied with vodka for disinhibition purposes, and there was evidence that her clothing had been disrupted. She alone was arrested for a public order offence, appeared before the Youth Court and received a Referral Order. It is recommended that her case is referred as a potential miscarriage of justice to the Criminal Case Review Commission."

South Yorkshire Police: Child Sexual Exploitation — A Strategic Problem Profile

Report by Force Intelligence Bureau, South Yorkshire Police, 2010
"Some networks have younger, 'good-looking' males who will always make the initial contact. These groomers will develop a relationship with victims, who will see the offender as an older boyfriend. He will work to isolate a girl from her friends and family. He may introduce drugs, alcohol or violence into the relationship and once the girl is dependent on the predator he will coerce her to have sex with his friends. A common pattern seen is that the victim's mobile numbers will be passed around. Victims ... are often threatened with or subjected to violence if they do not allow the exploitation to continue. In South Yorkshire, one offender attended a victim's home address and told her parents that he was going to "shag the arse off" their 15-year-old daughter and if they did not bring her out he would burn it down and take their youngest daughter with him."

Files reveal scandal of failed child protection

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a 32-year-old Iraqi Kurd asylum seeker. She gave a filmed police interview and identified her abusers:
● One girl, 15, spent days in hospital after a broken bottle was allegedly forced inside her by two young British Pakistani men in a park, causing her to bleed extensively;
● A 13-year-old girl was found at 3am with disrupted clothing in a house with a large group of Asian men who had fed her vodka. A neighbour reported the girl's screams. Police arrested the child for being drunk and disorderly but did not question the men;
● A specialist project's intelligence report for police identified 61 girls — 59 white, two Asian — linked to sexual exploitation by three brothers from another British Pakistani family. It named 41 associates of the brothers who allegedly used girls for sex. The confidential documents revealed today suggest a failure by police and social services to protect teenagers and bring charges against their abusers, even when agencies held detailed intelligence about the men and their victims. They also reveal that one young white girl, known by social services to have been sexually abused by Asian men from the age of 12, was offered

Inside today

The nationality of the perpetrators and ethnicity of the victims is inescapable

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language lessons in Urdu and Punjabi by Rotherham council. The aim was "to engage" her in education. Denis MacShane, MP for Rotherham, said he was appalled that in several meetings with senior South Yorkshire police officers to discuss internal trafficking, "no one has ever revealed or even hinted at the important allegations made by *The Times*". He added: "There's a culture here of denial and cover-up and a refusal to accept the reality that we have men living in the Rotherham community who treat young girls as objects for their sexual pleasure. It's time to tell the truth. We must root out this evil." In 2002, the confidential report of a Home Office-funded research project considered a series of Rotherham case studies. It criticised police for "in all cases" treating young victims "as deviant and promiscuous" while "the men they were found with were never questioned or investigated". There have only been two group prosecutions in South Yorkshire since 1996, when concerns were first raised about grooming networks. Several Iraqi Kurds were charged in Sheffield in 2007 and eight British Pakistanis went on trial in Rotherham in 2010. Throughout this period, Rotherham council has failed to accept the role of ethnicity and culture in such group offending. Earlier this year, this newspaper revealed how the town's safeguarding children board censored a report into the murder of a 17-year-old girl to conceal the ethnicity of the British Pakistani men suspected of using her for sex from the age of 11.

be systematic, tactical and repetitive. The defendants had family or friendship links. Younger boys were the girls' initial point of contact, "the prelude to a wider circle of 'friends', older and with malignant intentions". "This is a tactic seen in previous and subsequent cases in Rotherham," the review noted, warning that there was "cause to believe that many other girls are involved and that there are other perpetrators". It was a hard-hitting report in all but one respect. Issues of ethnicity and culture remained taboo. "Although the alleged perpetrators are of Asian origin and the victims are white, this is the factuality of these cases alone; nothing more can be drawn from that. It is imperative that suggestions/allusions of a wider cultural phenomenon are avoided. These assertions are without foundation." In reality, ten years of case files and intelligence reports had built the most solid of foundations for such an assertion. Within six months, a confidential in-

ternal report from South Yorkshire Police's intelligence bureau, *Child Sexual Exploitation — A Strategic Problem Profile*, gave further evidence of an escalating crisis. Commissioned by Detective Superintendent Adrian Teague, the force's director of intelligence and public protection, the 37-page report laid bare the scale of the crimewave and the inadequacy of the police's response. As of late 2010, up to 300 children were actively being sexually exploited in the county. Because most suffered "multiple criminal offences", the force was "in all likelihood looking at the number of offences resulting from CSE [child sexual exploitation] reaching the thousands each year". It was a "complex and serious area of criminality" yet there were "only three officers across the whole force with a permanent responsibility for CSE". One was part-time, and the other two had "additional portfolios that take up at least half their time". It added: "Force provision for the policing of

child sexual exploitation is not equivalent to the scale and seriousness of the problem." The report said "one of the most alarming findings" was "the existence of substantial and organised offender networks which identify, groom and sexually exploit victims on a sizeable scale". It added: "Nationally it is reported that the organisation levels of these groups appears to be increasing and the trafficking of children for sexual exploitation is becoming more and more commonplace. This is certainly the case in South Yorkshire." Many victims had troubled family backgrounds but most were not in care. Some were the daughters of middle-class professionals. The youngest identified victim was 10, with 14 and 15 the peak ages for exploitation. "Offenders tend to prefer younger victims. The exploitation tails off in most cases as the children get older and

offenders identify and groom new, younger victims." Listed, but not made public, were locations such as parks and shopping centres where offenders met and groomed girls. On the thorny issue of ethnicity, the report's message was stark. "Practitioners throughout the force state there is a problem with networks of Asian offenders both locally and nationally. This was particularly stressed in Sheffield, and even more so in Rotherham where there appears to be a significant problem with networks of Asian males exploiting young white females. Doncaster reported a similar problem with Iraqi Kurd offenders, as did Sheffield." Victims were "almost exclusively white or black", with "very few" Asian girls identified. "Work should be undertaken to explore why Asian and Iraqi males are over-represented as offenders," the report recommended. A few weeks after the report was written, the publication in January last year of an investigation by *The Times* into the sexual exploitation of young teen-

age girls by groups of men across northern England and the Midlands prompted a national inquiry ordered by the Government. Later in the year, a national action plan on child sexual exploitation was launched, demanding more effective multi-agency working and improved policing to secure prosecutions. Recent months have brought a change in South Yorkshire Police's approach to such cases. Staffing levels have increased and since April all sex-grooming incidents have been investigated by "eight dedicated specialist" officers. The force insisted last night that it was "a leading force in safeguarding vulnerable children and prosecuting offenders". The Times was "completely wrong to suggest a lack of commitment is shown towards the problem". It was also wrong to suggest the force had failed in its duty to protect children. Operation Central was "seen nationally as one of the best prosecutions for child sexual exploitation offences" and the force was running several live inves-

tigations, "two of which are large and likely to lead to more prosecutions". Rotherham council said it was in the process of establishing a multi-agency service in which social workers would be based in a police station to co-ordinate joint work to protect victims and prosecute offenders. Joyce Thacker, its director of children's services, said Ofsted recently praised "good collaborative working" between police and the council. Some "work with individuals did not lead to court cases for a variety of reasons" but in many respects Rotherham's services were "well ahead" of other regions. The authority's cabinet member for children's services, Paul Lakin, accepted that support for "a small number of vulnerable young people has not always reached the high standards we always look to provide." "Improvements have been made. Sexual predators come from different sections of the community and are criminals who need to be brought to justice regardless of their background."