

Rochdale gang jailed for total of 77 years for sexually exploiting young girls

Nine men get sentences of up to 19 years as judge says they were driven by lust and greed and treated victims as 'worthless'



The Rochdale gang: (top row, left to right) Abdul Rauf, Hamid Safi, Mohammed Sajid and Abdul Aziz; (bottom row, left to right) Abdul Qayyum, Adil Khan, Mohammed Amin and Kabeer Hassan. Photograph: Greater Manchester Police/PA

Nine men have received heavy jail sentences at Liverpool crown court for their part in a child sexual exploitation gang that groomed young vulnerable girls in Rochdale.

The trial, which ended on Tuesday, heard the five victims – the youngest was 13 when the abuse began – were plied with food, alcohol, drugs and gifts so they could be passed around a group of men for sex.

The nine defendants were jailed for a total of 77 years, with the ringleader, a 59-year-old man from Oldham, who cannot be identified for legal reasons, receiving a 19-year term after being convicted of two rapes, aiding and abetting rape, sexual assault and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Kabeer Hassan, 25, of Oldham, was jailed for nine years for rape and three years, concurrently, for conspiracy. Hamid Safi, 22, an illegal immigrant of no fixed address, was jailed for four years for conspiracy and one year, concurrently, for trafficking.

The other men all came from Rochdale. Abdul Qayyum, 44, was jailed for five years for conspiracy. Mohammed Amin, 45, was sentenced to five years for conspiracy and 12 months, concurrently, for sexual assault. Adil Khan, 42, was given eight years for conspiracy and eight years, concurrently, for trafficking for sexual exploitation. Mohammed Sajid, 35, was sentenced to 12 years for rape, six years for

conspiracy, one year for trafficking and six years, concurrently, for sexual activity with a child. Abdul Rauf, 43, a married father-of-five, was jailed for six years for conspiracy and six years, concurrently, for trafficking for sexual exploitation. Abdul Aziz, 41, a taxi driver, was sentenced to nine years for conspiracy and nine years, concurrently, for trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Before the sentencing, Martin Narey, former Barnardo's chief executive and government adviser on adoption, said in northern cities there is a "very significant over-representation of Asian men, Pakistani men, in these terrible crimes", although he added child abuse in general is perpetrated mostly by white men.

"For this particular sort of [crime](#), the street grooming – the trafficking of girls in northern towns in Derby, Leeds, Blackpool, Blackburn, Oldham and Rochdale – there's very troubling evidence that Asians are overwhelmingly represented in prosecutions for such offences," he told the BBC Radio 4's Today [pProgramme](#). "That's not to condemn a whole community; most Asians would absolutely abhor what we've seen in the last few days.

But Keith Vaz, chairman of the home affairs select committee, said the criminal justice system should not "dance to the tune of the BNP". "I do not believe it's a race issue. Why do I believe this? The assistant chief constable [of Greater Manchester police] has said so, and so has the deputy [children's](#) commissioner. We need to have a proper far-reaching investigation into these crimes." "There's a lot of questions about how organisations have cared for them. We do need to look into this. ... It's quite wrong to stigmatise a whole community." Greater Manchester police said further arrests could be made following the trial.

Greater Manchester Police said that further arrests could be made following the trial. One man, Mohammed Shazad, 39, from Rochdale. is wanted by police after he absconded while on bail. Its investigation identified a further 42 potential victims of on-street grooming. The force has faced criticism for its handling of the original investigation in 2008, when a 15-year-old girl complained she'd been attacked and groomed. The force has apologised to the victims after the Crown Prosecution Service decided not to pursue charges against the 59-year-old man and Kabeer Hassan, and the matter has been voluntarily referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission, which is supervising Greater Manchester police's inquiry.

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre said child exploitation spans all cultures and ethnicities. "These cases do highlight that Asian males have been involved in an organised manner in exploiting young women," a spokesperson said, but some of the cases involve offenders from different backgrounds as well.

Detective Inspector Michael Sanderson, senior investigating officer in the case, said the defendants had never shown the slightest bit of remorse and forced the victims to re-live their horrific ordeals. He vowed the force would "hunt down and prosecute" anyone involved in the sexual exploitation of children.