

# Grooming 'Epidemic': Almost 19,000 Children Identified as Rape, Sexual Assault and Exploitation Victims in England



The Department of Education revealed that more than 18,700 suspected victims of child sexual exploitation were identified by local authorities in England in 2018-19, a major increase from 3,300 reported in 2013. The Home Secretary noted that most abusers in high-profile grooming cases were of Pakistani heritage. They targeted vulnerable girls, particularly those in care (foster homes), on welfare or with learning difficulties. Every seven minutes in the UK an alleged crime is committed against a child, including rape and sexual assault, amounting to a total of 76,204 crimes against children reported in the UK during 2018 -2019.

A charity has called for a “radical rethink” of efforts to prevent sexual grooming after *The Independent* revealed that almost 19,000 victims have been identified in a year.

The NSPCC said victims may be left struggling for the rest of their lives with the trauma of their abuse.

“We are facing a nationwide crisis in the help available for thousands of children who have often suffered the most appalling abuse,” a spokesperson said.

“The insidious tactics used by groomers means these young people often don’t recognise what’s happening to them is abuse.

“We need to see more effort to improve our understanding of the motives and tactics of groomers to prevent abuse from happening in the first place.

“And we need a radical rethink in the way we help these young people targeted by groomers.”

The NSPCC is calling for more “joined-up support” from police forces, local NHS services and children’s services to identify victims and prevent abuse.

Several grooming cases brought to court have revealed abusers targeting vulnerable girls, particularly those in care or supported accommodation, or with learning difficulties.

Figures published by the Department for Education showed that more than 18,700 suspected victims of child sexual exploitation were identified by local authorities in England in 2018-19.

Campaigners said the true figure was far higher and accused the government of failing to tackle child sexual exploitation, despite promises made after high-profile cases in Rotherham and Rochdale.

Separate analysis by the NSPCC found that recorded sexual offences against children had reached an all-time high in 2018-19.

There were 76,204 alleged crimes, including rape and sexual assault against children in the UK – an average of one every seven minutes.

Sarah Champion, the Labour MP for Rotherham, said the figures show that grooming “remains one of the largest forms of child abuse in the country”.

“The government has singularly failed to tackle this issue head on. Its approach has been piecemeal and underfunded,” she told *The Independent*.

Sammy Woodhouse, a Rotherham victim who helped expose the scandal, said she is still receiving reports of current abuse in parts of the country.

“You hear this bulls\*\*t line, ‘lessons have been learned’, but they haven’t learned anything,” she added.

“I’ve said for years that this country’s in epidemic when it comes to abuse and exploitation. Authorities claim it’s under control but it’s not.”

Sajid Javid promised a review into the characteristics of grooming gangs in 2018, saying high-profile cases included a “high proportion of men of Pakistani heritage” and that “cultural reasons” could be at play.

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Additional source:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/grooming-child-sex-abuse-exploitation-rotherham-rochdale-police-a9215261.html>