

EXCLUSIVE: Telford child sex inquiry wasted 10 YEARS before stopping grooming gangs, says hero cop

A hero cop praised in this week's Telford child sex inquiry report today reveals how evidence against grooming gangs lay in a police vault for over a DECADE before being properly investigated.

The paperwork pinpointed key paedophiles in 1999 who were preying on teen girls. They included monster Mohammed Younis, who went on to run a "rape house" in the Shropshire town for years before he was convicted in 2012 after police investigation Operation Chalice.

Now former DCI Alan Edwards, who worked on Chalice, has decided to break his silence to the [Sunday Mirror](#).

He did so because it was [our investigation in 2018](#) (*it is correct that the Mirror reported in 2018, but others had been trying to get notice taken far earlier*) – then mocked by officials as "made up on the back of a fag packet" – that revealed more than 1,000 girls had been abused in Telford from the early 80s onwards, continuing even after Younis and six others were jailed. Mr Edwards tells how his squad discovered the explosive file on Asian men (*but they STILL can't say MUSLIM*) grooming girls as young as 11.

He claims he was told "not to rock the boat" when he joined the Telford division of West Mercia Police for fear of inflaming racial tensions with the town's Pakistani community. . . His revelations come after the findings of the independent inquiry set up because of our probe into the scandal.

It concluded child sex crimes in the town were ignored for generations and that agencies blamed children for the abuse. Tom Crowther QC's report also found crimes were not investigated because of "nervousness about race", girls were treated as "common prostitutes" and that "some officers in West Mercia Police had turned a blind eye to what was happening".

Mr Edwards was praised in the report with three colleagues for being "dogged" in their pursuit of justice for victims, despite huge personal cost.

He says he and his team were stunned to discover the 1999 file that had been locked away. "It should have been properly investigated and action noted then," he says. "We put it in the disclosure file to ensure it was properly recorded. What was important was we used this intelligence. But we need to acknowledge mistakes were made and learn from them."

There were other, even more sinister problems to reckon with too. He said: "My officers told me no one had wanted to do anything about it due to the racial element, and it could be a career-ender for whoever took it on."

Mr Edwards also revealed how the abused teens were put under pressure not to testify, with offenders threatening to sue police by alleging the investigation was false and based on racial discrimination.

He said: "The suspects promised the victims thousands of pounds and that they would split the money 50/50. We told the suspects and victims we were aware of the conspiracy. This stopped further talk."

Mr Crowther's report told how brazen rapists picked their victims up from school and how a teen pregnancy spike in the early 2000s was dismissed as a sexual health issue.

He added: "Without the Mirror's reporting, the truth about

Telford would still be buried. It was fundamental in the process which led to this report.”

Our investigation’s estimate of the scale of the abuse was described as “made up on the back of a fag packet” (*cigarette packet for non UK readers – used in the days before paper was cheap and plentiful for notes and quick calculations*) by Andrew Mason, head of the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Board at the time.

Mr Crowther this week described it as “a measured, reasonable and non-sensational assessment” of what had actually happened. We also linked the deaths of three victims to the scandal. Pregnant Lucy Lowe, 16, was killed with her mum Eileen, 49, and sister Sarah, 17, in a blaze started by her abuser Azhar Ali Mehmood in 2000. She had his first child, daughter Tasnim, at 14. *Mehmood removed the child from the house and left her under a tree in the garden before he started the fire that killed her mother, grandmother and aunt.* Becky Watson, 13, died in a car accident described as a “prank” in 2002 after two years of rape and trafficking. Her friend Vicky Round died at 20 in 2009 after gangs got her hooked on crack cocaine at 12 and heroin at 14.

The Telford report also vindicated ex-police chaplain , suspended after telling us of adult men seen trying to coax drunk teenagers into cars. He was reinstated after an inquiry but later quit.

As the local newspaper [*The Shropshire Star*](#) said last week

Rev Keith Osmund-Smith, lead co-ordinator of Telford Street Pastors, was also West Mercia Police chaplain up until last year. In 2016 he raised concerns that the force was not acting on reports of child sexual exploitation (CSE) in the town. Police responded by launching an investigation into his claims and he was put on sabbatical.

He was ultimately reinstated after it was decided his role as

a street pastor did not conflict with his position as police chaplain. He said police and council officials needed to examine why victims were blamed for crimes, instead of being helped.

“I think we do need to address the ongoing cultural responses from the police and to an extent the council authorities for what happened between 2012 and 2018. There was a deep ingrained cultural response that still laid the blame for a huge amount of criminal activity on the victims of those crimes.”

Rev Osmund-Smith said that the Street Pastors had become aware of ongoing problems with grooming, focussed on young girls, as part of ‘under 18s’ events held in Telford.

He said they had regularly witnessed older men trying to pick up girls in cars, and had raised the concerns as part of a scrutiny report prepared by Telford & Wrekin Council in 2016. It was one of the reports that put the focus on Telford CSE into the spotlight several years on from Operation Chalice.

Rev Osmund-Smith said: “The street pastors were on the streets every occasion there was an under-18 event and week after week we were seeing men from the adult night-time economy cruising in their cars. He added: “There were occasions when we took girls out of cars because we knew they would be in trouble if they stayed in those cars. But still there was no support.”