

Oldham, Greater Manchester: 'I tried to report abuse to police at 12 but was handed to predators and raped'

From the [jailed for six years after admitting six rapes](#). The case was closed while his accomplices were still outstanding.

Concerned that eight of her abusers were still walking the streets, the victim contacted police in 2012 to ask if there had been any progress. She applied to see records on her case and officers eventually launched a fresh investigation, codenamed Operation Solent.

Greater Manchester Police were unable to produce a "forensic strategy" for the original probe, or records to show if condoms and tissues found at the scene were examined. It revealed that, 10 months after his conviction, 22 items of evidence were returned to Chowdhury via his solicitor.

Files show a senior officer on the case wrote: "The decision to release certain items of property seems to exclude the possibility that the items may be of forensic relevance to the other unidentified suspects. The bedding and towel had not been submitted for forensic examination, however, they were returned."

His report also revealed 24 items of evidence were destroyed in 2008, including material from Chowdhury's car, and the contents of his bin. The officer added: "Clearly, items had been disposed of, and had they been retained from the original inquiry, then it may or may not have led to us identifying people or eliminating them."

Operation Solent did not lead to fresh charges so the girl

asked GMP to review the original case.

The victim has since made an official request to access her files, including a report written by a sexual health worker when she was 12. It says: "She is now on her third sexual partner. She has made an informed choice to remain SA [sexually active]. She has a mature attitude and looks older than her age." The notes said there was "no indication of abuse" – despite the girl's age. An outreach worker added: "I feel [victim] is very attention seeking and tries to get a response from me." *The girl had already been abused by a teacher who groomer her on-line, a serial abuser he was jailed in 2009 for assaults on other children.* In 2015, when the girl was 21, he admitted raping and abusing her and was jailed for a further 11 years. And last year, he was given a life sentence for raping a victim in Leeds in 2005.

In 2018, GMP upheld two of the girl's complaints, ruling that her case should not have been closed after Chowdhury's conviction and officers should not have taken four hours to respond when she went missing. It did not sanction any officers so she contacted the police watchdog – the IOPC.

It ruled a further four complaints should have been upheld. The IOPC said aspects of evidence retrieval were flawed and that potentially relevant evidence was destroyed. It also ruled greater care should have been taken with notebooks – which have been lost. This could give the victim grounds to sue the police under the Data Protection Act. The IOPC advised one officer should receive further training.

Going forward, the girl's case will be examined in the independent probe into child sexual exploitation [CSE] in Oldham. Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham commissioned the investigation as part of a wider inquiry into CSE across Manchester.

The Oldham probe will examine claims agencies were aware of

abuse but “failed to respond appropriately to safeguard children and subsequently covered up these failings”.

Gerard Jones, managing director for children and young people at Oldham council, said: “There were times when vulnerable people did not receive help they should expect and deserve. Things have improved significantly in recent years. We were, and are, determined not to shy away from issues, but to gain fresh, honest and independent insight, and learn lessons.”

The wider Manchester probe is also looking at Rochdale abuse – the basis of the BBC drama *Three Girls*. (*the gang who [local branch of Asda](#) with impunity.*)