

Rotherham grooming gang members jailed for over 18 years after raping 'extremely vulnerable' girls

Part of [Operation Stovewood](#) that has been investigating and prosecuting such cases in South Yorkshire for several years. Not your classic 'Asian' Muslim gang members, but either drawn in by lust for what was on offer, or inspired to use the same MO for their own criminal desires.

From [GB News](#)

[Two grooming gang members in Rotherham](#) have been handed a pair of decades-long prison sentences for raping girls who were "vulnerable in the extreme".

Ivorian national Romauld Stefan Houphouet, 37, and Zimbabwean Absolom Sigiyo, 42, who both lived in the Yorkshire town, were found guilty of raping two 15-year-old girls countless times between 2011 and 2012.



Absolom Sigiyo (left) and Romauld Stefan Houphouet (right) have been jailed NCA

The vile pair's victims told investigators they were taken to numerous "parties" in Rotherham where they were given alcohol and abused by the men, some of whom openly referred to them as "fresh meat". At Sheffield Crown Court on Wednesday, Houphouet was sentenced to 20 years behind bars, while Sigiyo was given an 18-and-a-half-year prison sentence.

Sentencing Judge Sarah Wright, addressed Houphouet and Sigiyo in the dock, and said: "You have each been found guilty involving exploitation and abuse of young girls in Rotherham area in 2011 and 2012. The victims were living in children's homes when they met you.

"They did not come from a stable or protective background, and so were extremely vulnerable to those who set out to exploit them. . . .

They had no sense of protecting themselves and I am quite sure you, Houphouet and in due course, Sigiyo targeted them because of it. I am satisfied that within a short space of time you

both knew full well that they were children, that they lived in a children's home, were unhappy in that home and that they were vulnerable to the attentions of men like you.

"The complainants in this case were groomed, coerced and to some extent intimidated. They were given alcohol and cigarettes and each of them was given attention and lured into a way of life that was highly damaging for them. Each of them was groomed. . .

"You referred to them as fresh meat – which was particularly degrading. You soon became aware the girls were only 15 and lived in a children's home, but you did not care. . .

"The offences were well-planned, you can have been in no doubt that the complainants were vulnerable in the extreme. You were clearly not immature, evidenced by the fact you both indulged in cynical manipulation and exploitation of your victims."

The convictions are the latest following the NCA's Operation Stovewood investigation, which has identified more than 1,100 victims of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham between 1997 and 2013.

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At Sheffield Crown Court on Wednesday, Houphouet was sentenced to 20 years behind bars, while Sigiyo was given an 18-and-a-

half-year prison sentence.

The two men were found guilty of multiple sexual offences including rape on Monday, March 3.

The court had been told how their victims were “powerless to prevent the actions of older and more mature individuals determined to exploit them for sexual purposes”.

Sentencing Judge Sarah Wright, addressed Houphouet and Sigiyo in the dock, and said: “You have each been found guilty involving exploitation and abuse of young girls in Rotherham area in 2011 and 2012. The victims were living in children’s homes when they met you.

“They did not come from a stable or protective background, and so were extremely vulnerable to those who set out to exploit them. [One victim] had been previously abused in a foster home and moved between various foster placements before being placed in the home. [Another victim] had also lived in a variety of placements.

“They distrusted authority and [one victim] said that she felt she was not well treated or looked after. She felt angry and let down and described that when she had previously spoken up, she had not been believed and was bullied at school. Aged 15, she would frequently leave the home and stay out beyond curfew.

“The girls were frequently reported missing. They dealt with their issues by drinking alcohol to excess. Known as underage by shopkeepers in the local vicinity they therefore would frequent Rotherham town centre where they could more easily purchase alcohol.

“They had no sense of protecting themselves and I am quite sure you, Houphouet and in due course, Sigiyo targeted them because of it. I am satisfied that within a short space of time you both knew full well that they were children, that

they lived in a children's home, were unhappy in that home and that they were vulnerable to the attentions of men like you.

"The complainants in this case were groomed, coerced and to some extent intimidated. They were given alcohol and cigarettes and each of them was given attention and lured into a way of life that was highly damaging for them. Each of them was groomed.

"Each of them lacked personal confidence in appearance – and association with you gave them a feeling of excitement away from the restrictions of their care home. They thought they were in control, but in fact, they were naive and vulnerable and you both exploited that to the full."

Wright added that she commends the courage of the complainants – and said that they showed immeasurable bravery and strength of character to give evidence and relive traumatic experiences in an open and public forum.

She added: "Each has shown bravery beyond measure in speaking about intimate and traumatic experiences. The childhood and adolescence of each of these complainants can never be regained, they have each suffered severe psychological harm and will continue to suffer through their lives as a result of your actions.

"You referred to them as fresh meat – which was particularly degrading. You soon became aware the girls were only 15 and lived in a children's home, but you did not care.

"The grooming involved a degree of planning and each of the victims has suffered a considerable degree of harm. The victims were vulnerable. All of the offences involved grooming.

"The offences were well-planned, you can have been in no doubt that the complainants were vulnerable in the extreme. You were clearly not immature, evidenced by the fact you both indulged in cynical manipulation and exploitation of your victims."

NCA Senior investigating officer Kath Blain said it was one of the most harrowing cases he had ever investigated.

He added: "Sigiyo and Houphouet lured two vulnerable girls to parties where they kept the children intoxicated so they could abuse them in the worst ways."

The convictions are the latest following the NCA's Operation Stovewood investigation, which has identified more than 1,100 victims of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham between 1997 and 2013. It was established after the landmark Jay Report, which found that hundreds of girls had been abused by gangs of men of mainly Pakistani heritage in the town.