

Rotherham: politicians and police 'abused girls'

From the [The Times](#) and the [council has since resigned](#) and will be replaced by government commissioners.

Complaints against the two Rotherham councillors are understood to have been sent to the National Crime Agency, which is investigating child-sex crimes in the town, according to [The Times](#). One of the councillors is still serving, it is understood.

Allegations against the police officer, who is also said to have regularly passed information to abusers targeting vulnerable children for sex, have separately been referred to the police watchdog by the South Yorkshire force. A second officer is also believed to be under investigation over claims he failed to take action after receiving information about his colleague's alleged conduct. (The inquiry was triggered by) claims from a charity worker that a police officer was on the payroll of groups of men who groomed and sexually abused children in Rotherham. It was claimed that the rogue officer undermined efforts to protect girls by sharing confidential information with sex criminals of Pakistani origin.

The report accuses senior Pakistani councillors of wielding a "disproportionate influence" within the authority, "particularly on issues which appeared to affect the Pakistani heritage community such as the taxi trade". Taxi drivers were closely implicated in facilitating the sexual abuse of vulnerable girls in Rotherham. The report finds that serious weaknesses within the Labour-run council meant that insufficient checks were carried out "to ensure that only fit and proper persons" held a taxi licence.

Jahangir Akhtar, the local authority's deputy leader and vice-chairman of the South Yorkshire police and crime panel until his resignation in 2013, is said to have been a "powerful figure" within Rotherham politics, with certain observers even feeling that he had "an influence that extended to the police".

Some councillors and employees at the authority felt intimidated by him and spoke about him with "a level of fear". He was also said to have made threats. He denies this. The report said that despite losing his seat in this year's May elections, Mr Akhtar "continues to have a presence" in the town. He is said to have made representations on behalf of taxi drivers and on one occasion "officers felt he had brought pressure to bear on them which resulted in proposals to undertake unannounced safety checks on taxis being stopped".

Staff felt that Mr Akhtar and another senior Labour councillor, Mahroof Hussain, "suppressed discussion for fear of upsetting community relations". Mr Hussain is said to have denied placing undue pressure on council officers.