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Parties unite in last-ditch bid to save the Union

Leaders pledge to fast track further devolution

Hamish Macdonell
Francis Elliott Political Editor

David Cameron and Ed Miliband will unite this week to make a last-ditch attempt to save the Union by publishing a government paper that commits to handing more powers to Scotland within days of a "no" vote.

Westminster's main parties, shaken by the first poll indicating a lead for independence, are rushing out a pledge for a legislative timetable for more devolution to try to halt the nationalists.

A government command paper,

Time is running out for the No campaign

Leading article, page 28

backed by Mr Cameron, Mr Miliband and Nick Clegg, on devo-max setting out how and when powers could be transferred could be published as soon as tomorrow.

Alex Salmond, Scotland's first minister, was contemptuous. "Having failed to scare the Scottish people, obviously the next step is to try to bribe us," he said yesterday.

He accused the Better Together campaign of a panicked response to the YouGov poll indicating that 51 per cent of Scots supported independence and 49 per cent backed the Union.

Amid the fallout from the poll:

- George Osborne denied that Mr Cameron would have to resign if Scots voted "yes" as senior Tories said that he would face "high danger".

- The Bank of England was braced for heavy selling of sterling as the markets

reacted to increasing uncertainty over the future of the UK.

- Buckingham Palace insisted that the Queen was "strictly neutral" after reports that the royal family was increasingly concerned.

Leaders of the pro-Union effort claimed privately to be unsurprised at the shift towards the Yes camp from undecided voters. They said that they expected those prepared to make a "leap of faith" would declare their intention first. Those who remain undecided tend heavily to the No camp, according to its strategists.

The move to reveal the mechanisms for a further devolution settlement, likely to include a commission to decide its shape and legislative timetable, is aimed at reassuring the "don't knows" that they are not backing the status quo.

Better Together insiders admit that the situation is precarious. The poll again confirmed that Labour voters, the key swing constituency of the referendum, were moving heavily towards independence. So far the trend is mostly limited to party supporters below the age of 50, with older voters remaining more sceptical about the economic case for separation from the rest of the UK. "If that starts to change we really are screwed," one senior figure in the pro-Union campaign said.

The focus on Labour voters leaves Mr Cameron reliant on Mr Miliband to appeal to the party's heartland supporters. The prime minister intends to leave the stage clear this week for Labour to make a concerted push.

In a speech to the TUC general council dinner in Liverpool today Mr Miliband will set the referendum battle in the context of the "true traditions

Continued on page 7, col 4



Knockout couple George Clooney with his fiancée, Amal Alamuddin, at the Celebrity Fight Night in Florence yesterday, amid speculation that they would marry this month. The charity event featured comedy boxing matches, auctions and live music

Rotherham victim 'told police chief of abuse'

Andrew Norfolk
Chief Investigative Reporter
Billy Kenber

A police and crime commissioner who is facing calls for his resignation over the Rotherham child-sex scandal knew for years that local girls were being groomed and ruthlessly abused by men, it was claimed yesterday.

Shaun Wright was the councillor responsible for children's services in the South Yorkshire town for a five-year period when groups of offenders used and trafficked young teenagers for sex with seeming impunity.

A sex-grooming victim has told *The*

Times of her outrage at Mr Wright's professed ignorance, in former years, of the scale and severity of such offending.

She said that more than eight years ago she and other survivors of such abuse gave him a detailed, face-to-face account of multiple crimes committed against them when they were children.

"He seemed genuinely shocked. He talked like he was going to go away and see that something was done, but we never saw him again. It was the end of it for him, but not for us.

"I sat two feet from him and told him really, really private things. I don't know how he can go on national television and say he wasn't aware, that he didn't

know anything about it. For years they had all the reports and information, but they just ignored it."

An independent inquiry found that at least 1,400 Rotherham children were sexually exploited from 1997 to 2013, largely by men of Pakistani origin. It criticised police and council officials for suppressing and ignoring detailed evidence of abuse.

Mr Wright, South Yorkshire's police and crime commissioner, recently voiced regret that he "wasn't more aware of the issue at the time". He said that "if I knew then what I know now, then clearly more could have been done".

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IN THE NEWS

Strictly women only

Strictly Come Dancing has returned to the BBC with an all-female presenting team. Pixie Lott, the pop star, is the bookmakers' favourite to win the competition. **Page 3**

School literacy battle

Forty-five per cent of poor white British-born boys cannot read well when they leave primary school, according to a study commissioned to support a literacy campaign. **Page 14**

Isis widens its reach

Islamic State (Isis) jihadists are seeking recruits in al-Qaeda's heartlands in Afghanistan and Pakistan as they try to build a global coalition beyond the Middle East. **Page 30**

Alibaba's promise

The internet titan Alibaba has assured British brands that it will become easier to prevent Chinese companies from using the site's trading platform to sell counterfeit goods. **Page 37**

Grand prix 'payback'

The Formula One driver Nico Rosberg was said to have given Lewis Hamilton victory in the Italian Grand Prix after the Briton accused him of forcing him out of the last race. **Page 64**

WE HAVE PREPARED A WICKER MAN FOR THE NO VOTERS



'Why can't they admit they made mistakes?'

Andrew Norfolk

By the time she met Shaun Wright it was already too late for Julie. Her young body, an object for men's routine pleasure since the age of 11, had already suffered a lifetime's casual brutality.

Her anger in recent days, burning as she describes her meeting, almost a decade ago, with the man who is now South Yorkshire's police and crime commissioner, is on behalf of the hundreds of other lost children.

Some encountered the same sex offenders, were let down by the same child-protection system that treated her with an indifference that bordered on contempt. History kept repeating itself in Rotherham's flats, parks and back streets, with shattering consequences for many young teenage girls.

It might have been so different, an independent inquiry has found, had senior police and council officials heeded the alarm bells sounded by frontline workers and taken decisive action.

For Julie (not her real name), those missed opportunities crystallise into the day, more than eight years ago, when she says that she and three young women shared their histories with Mr Wright, then the Labour councillor responsible for children's services.

The story she told him, as they sat at a small table in the kitchen of Risky Business, a youth project that supported exploited children, was of a child who grew to know far too much about sex and far too little about love.

Born to an alcoholic father, sexually abused as a very young girl by a relative of her mother's partner, she spent her early years in and out of care. She was stick thin and sometimes so hungry that she stole children's packed lunches. She slept on the landing of her family home, and was beaten and plunged into an ice-cold bath for angering her father. Julie was 11 when she was permanently removed from his care.

She entered a foster home where another 11-year-old resident had a 27-year-old white "boyfriend", who introduced Julie to his brother. In the early hours one morning, police arrived at a house where the children lay naked in an upstairs bedroom.

"They [the men] told us to hide down the side of the bed. The room was dark. A young policeman came into the room. I knew he'd seen me. He turned away and said, 'No, there's no girls here,' and they left."

Was that the first time she had sex with a man? She shrinks and her barely audible reply is delivered, head bowed: "It was the first time I said yes."

At 12, she entered her first children's home. An older girl was "going out" with a man who features in numerous confidential social services and police intelligence reports, seen by *The Times*, about the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham.

He was a leading player in a large circle of men of Pakistani origin for whom the sight of a troubled young teenage girl, easily lured by a can of lager or a



Men began grooming Julie (not her real name) when she was 11. She has now spoken out, below, claiming she revealed her story to Shaun Wright at a meeting



cigarette, presented the prospect of easy sex and a business opportunity.

There is tiredness in her voice as she relates encounters with adults from the late 1990s into the early years of this century, years spent in homes, foster placements and hostels.

Police feature, rarely for the right reasons. Some were on good terms with the Pakistani gang; one was far too friendly with the girls. One officer, she says, talked her out of having a medical examination after a man tried to force a bottle inside her when she was 15.

"I'd told my social worker. The policeman was supposed to take me to a special unit, but he parked in a lay-by, turned to me and said that no good would come of it, that nobody would believe me. They'd say I was a liar."

Aged 17, Julie was "sold" by her main

abuser to a middle-aged Pakistani restaurateur in Blackpool. He made her have sex with men in lieu of rent for her squalid room above the restaurant.

She was rescued by Risky Business, whose staff brought her back to South Yorkshire. With support, she broke free from her "friends" and believes that those workers saved her life. She was in her early 20s when, she says, she spoke to Mr Wright, who is refusing to resign as commissioner. Three more victims are said to have described the same meeting. What did it feel like to watch him, voicing dismay at the findings of the inquiry and regret that he did not know more of such abuse at the time?

"I'm taking it personally. I made him a mug of tea that day. We were telling him how it became normal for us, that we'd complained and nobody had done anything, that in the end we accepted it because it became a way of life," she said. "I told Shaun Wright what I had to do to three Pakistani men in the back of a car. Names were named. He acted shocked but we never saw him again."

"They've swept it under the carpet for years. Why can't they admit that they made some really, really bad mistakes and ... a lot of girls' lives were ruined?"

Commissioner stands firm

Continued from page 1

is understood that soon after he became the local authority's lead member for children's services in 2005, Mr Wright was invited to meet a group of young women who as children had suffered violent abuse. He is said to have listened to their stories during a function at the offices of a Rotherham youth project that worked closely with victims of child sexual exploitation.

Mr Wright told the Commons home affairs select committee in written evidence last year that he did not meet any sex-grooming victims during his council years. He told MPs: "I do not believe it would have been appropriate for me to request to meet victims of child sexual exploitation as this would have been an invasion of privacy of these vulnerable victims."

Asked about the function at the youth project, Mr Wright told *The Times*: "I do not recall the meeting." He modified his earlier statement to MPs, saying yesterday that he did not "recall" being informed of the individual

circumstances of abused Rotherham children. The home affairs committee has reopened its 2012-2013 inquiry in response to the findings of an independent report on Rotherham by Alexis Jay. Mr Wright will give evidence to before MPs tomorrow.

He has resisted calls for his resignation by the prime minister, the home secretary and Ed Miliband. Sheffield City Council passed a vote of no confidence in Mr Wright last week.

The police commissioner, who was elected to his £85,000-a-year post in 2012, said that he would not resign because he had "always acted in the best interests of young people". He added that the Jay report acknowledged that he had "acted appropriately" in response to four sex-grooming reports "during my time in office".

He said: "I have improved the policing of child sexual exploitation in South Yorkshire during the last two years and I intend to continue on that path to deliver sustainable, transformational change."

Question over Establishment links of new child-abuse inquiry chief

Francis Elliott Political Editor

Theresa May is to stand by her choice of chairwoman for an inquiry into historic child abuse despite Fiona Woolf's links to Lord Brittan of Spennithorpe, who is embroiled in claims of an establishment cover-up.

The home secretary announced the appointment last week after Baroness Butler-Sloss, her initial choice, was forced to stand down following claims that she faced a possible conflict of

interest. The Home Office refused to say yesterday if it knew that Ms Woolf, the lord mayor of London, had a house in the same street as Lord Brittan and sits with him on the board of a City conference.

When he was home secretary, Lord Brittan was handed information about an alleged paedophile ring, which he has said he passed to officials.

Ms Woolf also donated to a charity appeal by Lord Brittan's wife, Diana, with whom she sits as a judge on an

awards panel, according to *The Mail on Sunday* newspaper.

Simon Danczuk, the Labour MP for Rochdale who has helped to expose failures to investigate abuse allegations, called on Ms Woolf to reassure victims. "It's up to her now to say what her links are with Lord Brittan," he said.

However, Tom Watson, another MP who helped to force an inquiry, said: "The panel should be judged as a team. It's time to get on with their inquiry."

If disquiet over the links were to grow



Fiona Woolf was chosen last week to lead the inquiry

it would threaten to become a major embarrassment for Ms May after the departure of Lady Butler-Sloss, whose brother, Lord Havers, was attorney-general during the 1980s when he tried

to dissuade Geoffrey Dickens, a Tory MP, from revealing that Sir Peter Hayman, a diplomat, was a paedophile.

Lord Brittan has defended his handling of a dossier passed to him by Mr Dickens that contained allegations of abuse by other prominent figures in Westminster and Whitehall.

The results of a smaller inquiry into why hundreds of Home Office files relating to claims of sexual abuse by prominent figures went missing is due by the end of the month.

Council chief and officer 'discussed grooming crisis'

Andrew Norfolk
Chief Investigative Reporter
Billy Kenber

A conversation between South Yorkshire's top policeman and the man who ran Rotherham council triggered moves to discipline the researcher who first uncovered a sex-grooming crisis in the town, it is revealed today.

Evidence that the men at the very top of each organisation discussed a claim that growing numbers of children were "being left at risk and their abusers unapprehended" has been found by *The Times* in records of staff meetings held more than a dozen years ago.

Handwritten notes from 2001 reveal that the warning, in a letter to police from a worker conducting government-funded research, "caused such a fuss" that Mike Hedges, then the chief constable of the South Yorkshire force, "mentioned it" to Ged Fitzgerald, the council's chief executive.

Mr Fitzgerald, who is now chief executive of Liverpool city council, is said in the notes to have discussed the letter's claims with a senior council official.

The researcher was called to a meeting at which she was berated for sending the letter. She subsequently faced severe pressure to delete and amend sections of her final report.

The Times can reveal that a senior official described one of its findings, that dozens of teenage girls were being groomed and abused by "British-Asian" men, as "dangerous and inflammatory".

Martin Kimber, Rotherham's chief executive since 2009, announced his departure from the council yesterday, two weeks after an independent inquiry blamed local agencies for consistently failing to protect girls from predatory men over a 16-year period.

David Crompton, the current head of South Yorkshire police, Shaun Wright, the force's police and crime commissioner, and Joyce Thacker, the director of children's services, will be questioned about the scandal by the Commons home affairs select committee today.

The researcher's draft report linked

members of a family of Pakistani origin to sex-grooming offences against 54 Rotherham children. Professor Alexis Jay's recent inquiry noted that "senior officers in the police and the council were deeply unhappy" with it.

Contemporaneous notes seen by this newspaper raise questions about Mr Fitzgerald's role in attempts by his staff to undermine the research as fabricated or exaggerated. Such allegations were false, the Jay inquiry found, and "led inevitably to suspicions of collusion and intended cover-up".

The internal meeting notes undermine recent claims by Mr Hedges, chief constable of the South Yorkshire force from 1998 to 2004, that his "first inkling" of widespread sex-grooming in Rotherham came when he read media reports two weeks ago. He said yesterday that he had no "specific recollection" of the researcher's letter from 2001, despite evidence that he discussed its contents with Mr Fitzgerald. He could not remember being informed, at any stage, of "allegations of organised child exploitation" in Rotherham.

The Times was told that Mr Fitzgerald felt it would be inappropriate to answer questions about his tenure as chief executive "until the next steps are clearer in respect of any formal or judicial processes".

In her 2002 draft report, the researcher said she was told to abandon part of her work after "concerns were expressed to the [council] chief executive".

Reference to those concerns was omitted from the final version, submitted to the Home Office in July that year, but the researcher resisted demands from senior officials to make further changes. Notes of a meeting with her line manager in June 2002 record the researcher's "deep reservations" about "altering data" and her perception that the demand by senior officials for extensive changes "looks like [a] cover-up".

She was told that she "had been given an instruction and ... was expected to follow it". The Home Office report was never published.

Leading article, page 20



Enigma variations Benedict Cumberbatch and Keira Knightley, who star as wartime codebreakers in *The Imitation Game*



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Irish cardinal who helped to cover up abuse resigns

Phillip Willan Rome

Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Cardinal Sean Brady, the head of the Catholic Church in Ireland during a period of turmoil and scandal, the Vatican announced yesterday.

Cardinal Brady's 18 years as Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland coincided with revelations of widespread sexual abuse of minors and a church cover-up, to which Dr Brady was himself a party.

In 2010 Cardinal Brady acknowledged that he represented the church at meetings where two teenage victims of Father Brendan Smyth, a sex abuser, were sworn to silence about their complaints. Dr Brady said that he had merely acted as a note-taker at the meetings in 1975, when he was secretary to the Bishop of Kilmore, and "had absolutely no authority over" Smyth. It later emerged that Dr Brady had failed to ensure the safety of victims of Smyth. Smyth died in 1997, one month into a

12-year prison sentence after he pleaded guilty to 74 charges of abuse of boys and girls over more than 30 years.

Brendan Boland, a victim and the author of the book *Sworn to Silence*, said Cardinal Brady should have resigned four years ago. He said that the cardinal "chose to cover it up to further his career. He forgot the real victims here."



Cardinal Sean Brady presided over scandal

He could have stopped children being abused after 1975, but he chose not to."

Mr Boland said he was disappointed that in the end the cardinal had been allowed to retire on turning 75 "as if he had done nothing wrong".

Cardinal Brady will be replaced by Eamon Martin, a former teacher.

TOD'S

TODS.COM

Rotherham police dismissed

Andrew Norfolk, Billy Kenber

Sex criminals who abused vulnerable children escaped justice because police in Rotherham dismissed victims as "silly girls" and "lovesick teenagers", a secret recording reveals.

Officers from the scandal-hit town's child exploitation team admitted that until recently their colleagues ignored offences in cases where young victims were groomed to comply with the sexual demands of adults.

One of the specialist officers also said that police who failed to act after witnessing an "adult male having sex on the floor" with a 14-year-old were unlikely to confirm her claims because they would "know they're going to get in the sh**".

They were speaking last year at a private meeting with an abuse survivor. A recording of the conversation has been obtained by *The Times*. An independent inquiry, criticising police and council officials for failing to protect 1,400 children from "appalling levels of crimes and abuse" over 16 years from 1997 led to Labour party suspensions and the resignation of four senior figures linked to Rotherham council.

The conduct of individual police officers has not faced similar scrutiny but the officers' recorded admissions, plus evidence from more than 200 confidential files, confirm that South Yorkshire police left hundreds of young teenagers at the mercy of sex-grooming gangs.

The Times can now name seven officers who played a role in the force's failure to protect one young girl from horrific sexual exploitation. The force has recently referred 14 serving or retired officers to the independent police complaints commission, which has also been asked to examine 11 exploitation-linked "incidents" involving police in Rotherham. The officers have not been



Police and officials failed to protect 1,400 Rotherham children from sex groomers

identified. The IPCC said that it was still assessing the referrals.

In two of the cases sent to the IPCC, missing Rotherham girls were found by police late at night at a house in the company of one or more adults of Pakistani origin. On each occasion the child was arrested but no action was taken against the men suspected of grooming them for abuse.

One girl said that her treatment by police made her feel "more like a criminal than a victim". Their handling of her case was one example of multiple blunders, including:

- Police officers told a mother that to investigate more than 150 "Asian men" whose contact details were on her 13-year-old daughter's mobile phone would breach the child's human rights.
- Some abused children were condemned by officers as "little tarts"; others accused young teenagers of lying or exaggerating when they made

disclosures about violent sex crimes.

A senior detective who now investigates complaints against the police opposed the prosecution of three alleged sex offenders in 2003, in part because their victim, who was 14, seemed insufficiently traumatised.

At their meeting with a former abuse victim last March, officers from Rotherham's child sexual exploitation team described a recent transformation in the force's approach to cases where a

groomed child was in regular contact with an adult offender: "Opinions have changed. Now we identify that as child abuse. Before, they'd see it as a lovesick teenager that keeps going back to this fella. We now identify that as a grooming process. In the past, people's opinions were, 'That silly girl keeps going back'. Now we understand. It's a child."

Alexis Jay's inquiry report, published in August, revealed that identified offenders in Rotherham were "almost all" of Pakistani heritage. It said that there was "a widespread perception that some senior people in the council and the police wanted to downplay the ethnic dimension to the crime".

David Crompton, the chief constable of South Yorkshire, has pledged that an external police force will examine "clear failures ... over many years" by police in the town. The National Crime Agency has agreed to lead the inquiry.

Mr Crompton also gave an "absolute commitment" to "deal with disciplinary issues" against officers who "failed to properly investigate" cases of child sexual exploitation.

The force is additionally conducting two major criminal inquiries into past sex-grooming cases in Rotherham, involving 18 suspects and 283 victims. In total, 181 offences are under investigation and 23 arrests have been made.

A spokeswoman said that the force was now "acutely aware of the grooming process" and has "a deeper understanding of child sexual exploitation". It was "considerably more creative" in its investigation of such crimes, using polygraph testing on sex offenders and placing less reliance on a child's evidence. "The Alexis Jay report laid bare the failings of South Yorkshire police over a number of years. This made for painful reading, however we are determined ... to ensure we provide the best possible service to victims in the future."

Leading article, page 30

theimes.co.uk/crime

Rot began at the top and seeped down

Senior police officers ignored warnings about growing scale of sex abuse, Andrew Norfolk and Billy Kenber report

Men took their pleasure as sexual exploitation became a way of life for many Rotherham children. Police watched it happen.

Junior police officers were guilty of numerous blunders but they took their lead from higher ranks whose commitment to tackling such crimes appeared barely lukewarm. In the South Yorkshire force, the rot began at the top and seeped down.

The town's district commander for a four-year period from 2001, during which police ignored a series of warnings about the growing scale and severity of offending, was Detective Chief Superintendent Christine Burbeary.

Ms Burbeary was promoted to the post after her first marriage ended and she began a relationship with Martin Davies, who was then the force's deputy chief constable and who had been on her interview panel when she was promoted to chief inspector in 1996. The couple married in 2004. It is not suggested that any of her promotions were linked to their relationship.

As commander, she played a leading role in a community cohesion task force, set up to combat Islamophobia



Christine Burbeary: accused of turning deaf ear to pleas

powerful and you upset them at your peril. To avoid such problems, some senior officers went the other way."

Joyce Thacker, who resigned last month as Rotherham council's director of children's services, told a parliamentary inquiry that until Ms Burbeary retired in 2005 staff working closely with child victims "were finding it difficult for the police to take any notice of this issue".

The commander is said to have verbally attacked a researcher, who was funded by the Home Office and whose letter warned the force's chief constable in 2001 that police in Rotherham were not doing enough to "protect children at risk and target their abusers".

She was also involved in attempts to amend sections of a report in which brothers from a family of Pakistani origin were linked to sex offences against 54 young girls.

Serving under Ms Burbeary was Inspector Anita McKenzie, who also retired in 2005. She headed the district's community safety unit and received monthly reports from youth workers. These contained offenders' names, mobile phone numbers, home addresses and the locations where abuse took place. It is believed that none of the reports led to a prosecution.

The intelligence was apparently entered into "Box 5" of the force's computer network. This was said to be a secure system designed to protect the source's identity,

but in practice it meant, according to one member of staff, that it "disappeared into a black hole and was never seen again". Few police officers were permitted access to the information and most were unaware of its existence.

South Yorkshire police said that it believed Box 5 to be a grading of intelligence known as "level 5", which permits access to confidential material on a "need-to-know basis". The force said that this was an effective way to handle sex-grooming intelligence and that it also protected victims.

South Yorkshire police said that issues raised by *The Times* would "form part of" the National Crime Agency's independent investigation into the force's past handling of street-grooming sex cases.

The Police Superintendents' Association said that Ms Burbeary would give every assistance to the agency's inquiry. It would be "inappropriate to respond to questions before that investigation has taken place", it added.

Neil Bowles, the chairman of the South Yorkshire Police Federation, said that the other officers named today by *The Times* felt that "it would be inappropriate to comment on specific cases at a time when complaints may be forthcoming".

The officers were said to be concerned that "misleading, untrue and damaging allegations may be published about them based on information and documentation which we understand is incomplete and heavily redacted".



Catalogue of failure

Andrew Norfolk analyses Amy's case file to discover what went wrong

From day one, the first police officer to speak to the family makes the mistake of concluding that violent sexual attacks should not be classified as rapes if the victim remained in contact with the alleged offender.

The officer writes off the case and implicitly calls Amy a liar. The alleged rapist was the youngest of a family of brothers named in a report given to police in 2001 in which his elder brothers were linked to offences against 54 underage Rotherham girls. It is not known whether DC Norton was aware of this report. South Yorkshire Police said this would be "explored during the independent investigation" by the National Crime Agency.

The comments add weight to criticism in a Home Office-funded report that police invariably treated exploited children as "deviant and promiscuous" while "the men they were found with were never questioned or investigated".

Mr Hedges, chief constable from 1998 to 2004, says he has no recollection of this letter. He has said that sex-grooming crimes were "never raised" with him as a high priority.

Girl, 13, was blamed as men queued to assault her

Case study

abuse victims as 'silly girls'

April 7, 2003 First rape disclosure by Amy, 13, to her mother. Uniformed officers go to family home. Medical examination finds bruising to upper lip, inner thigh and buttock. Report sent to duty sergeant by PC Susan Woods:

"Although Amy says ***** has assaulted her, which she describes as grabbing her round the mouth, round her throat, pulled her hair and grabbed her breasts, it appears this matter would be more realistically viewed as USI, unlawful sexual intercourse, as she has gone back to see him repeatedly."

April 24 On April 14, six days after a police interview in which she described four rapes, Amy withdraws her complaint. Threats have been made. Report filed 10 days later by Detective Constable Andrea Norton:

"She maintained her story but stated that she did not want to pursue her complaint any further. It is my opinion that the story given by the complainant is not true. There is no evidence to support the story and no further lines of inquiry."

October 3 Two weeks after social worker receives phone call describing how Amy was "raped by young Asian men" who have been "getting in contact with [her] again", she says she is willing to tell police about a new incident in which five men sexually assaulted her in a flat. She wants to "get away from them and stop it happening to other girls". Family support worker's notes:

"PC Chris Barron said 'she could be prosecuted for wasting police time if she changes her mind'. Police have told Amy that 'the Asian men won't come up to your house, but if we see you in Rotherham with them we'll just think it's that little tart back again and bring you home!'"

October 10 Amy gives videoed police interview alleging sex attacks in the flat. Ten days later, her parents write to the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, and to the force's chief constable, Mike Hedges:

"This particular group of men in Rotherham thinks that they are above the law and can get away with doing whatever they like. How many more children are going to be lured into the net of these evil men before there is some justice done?"

Amy said the police made her feel like she was under suspicion the whole time



October 23 Three men aged 19, 20 and 32 are arrested and questioned. One admits having sex with Amy in the flat and that a succession of men went into a bedroom, one at a time, while she was there. Suspects released on bail.

Two weeks later, report from Detective Constable Norton to Detective Inspector Mark Foster highlights contradictions in Amy's account and states that when the parents voiced concern for her safety, she

"informed them that the police could not stop Amy from meeting these men if she wished to do so and that they had to take some responsibility for protecting their own daughter! Amy's mother has an unrealistic view of what will happen. She expects all the men to go to prison for a long time."

November 10 Family support worker notes that Amy's parents have been told that police will not be pursuing the case. A day later, report is sent from Detective Inspector Foster to Detective Constable Norton:

"As the file stands there is no realistic prospect of conviction. The complainant has been video interviewed. I understand that she was not traumatised and is quite dismissive regarding her relationship with the suspects. She does appear to be saying she was pressurised into performing oral sex. This was clarified and she effectively says she could have just stopped. There is no corroboration in respect of any of the allegations. She cannot be classified as a strong witness."

December 2 Family support worker's notes: Amy's mother has been informed by DI Foster that the police "have now decided to take Amy's case to the CPS".

December 9 Letter to Amy's father from Chief Superintendent Christine Burbeary, district police commander for Rotherham:

"I refer to your letter to the Chief Constable relating to your daughter Amy. I know that Detective Inspector Mark Foster and Inspector Anita McKenzie in charge of police community safety unit have been in touch with you regarding this matter."

January 15, 2004 Five days after PC Barron tells Amy's social worker the inquiry "wasn't looking good as far as any prosecution because it was hard to prove that [Amy] had been made to do things against her will", letter is sent to Kevin Barron, MP for Rother Valley, by Ms Burbeary, rejecting his request for a meeting to discuss concerns about the handling of Amy's case:

"This matter is still being investigated by CID officers from Rotherham district ... and therefore at present it would not be a suitable time to arrange the meeting suggested by you."

2011 July Amy's mother received a letter from DC Norton in March 2004, informing her that the CPS were not taking the case to court. The family support worker noted that Amy was "very depressed" and had concluded that police "believe the men, not her". Seven years later, she received £20,900 after the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority ruled there was evidence that she was raped and sexually abused as a child.

Police took her blood-stained clothes but then lost them. A few months later, by now aged 14, she was lured by new "friends" to a flat where, she told police, she was held in a bedroom and sexually abused by five men. Three arrests were made but no one was charged.

In despair, her parents sold the family business and moved overseas. *The Times* first told Amy's story in 2012. Today, we publish excerpts from the reports of police

The exclamation mark is significant. Her superior officer is invited to share Detective Constable Norton's view that Amy's parents are partly to blame for her encounters with men.

Amy is a troubled child steeped in a cycle of abuse. She does not fit the police's narrow understanding of how victims should talk and behave. Detective Inspector Foster suggests she could have rejected the sexual demands of several adults. Police conclude the case should not proceed. South Yorkshire Police said this decision would be investigated by the National Crime Agency.

This seems a puzzlingly swift U-turn. South Yorkshire Police said that its decision to send Amy's file to the CPS was taken after the Home Secretary "asked" that the case be reconsidered".

The family support worker noted that Amy's parents received the letter but "have never had any contact" with Inspector McKenzie and did not even "know her name".

As Rotherham's senior police officer from 2001 to 2005, Ms Burbeary is accused by council staff of failing to take seriously reports and intelligence about the scale and gravity of sex-grooming offences. During her stewardship, hundreds of children are thought to have been exploited; it is understood that no one was prosecuted.

Amy was let down by the police from start to finish. The force even opposed, as recently as 2011, her bid for compensation for the sexual crimes committed against her. Seven officers who featured in her case, four of them still serving in South Yorkshire, are identified today: PC Susan Woods, DC Andrea Norton (now Detective Sergeant Andrea Suter), PC Chris Barron, Detective Inspector Mark Foster (now Detective Chief Inspector), Inspector Anita McKenzie (retired), Chief Superintendent Christine Burbeary (retired) and the force's former chief constable, Mike Hedges.

more important matters." South Yorkshire Police say the force will ask the National Crime Agency to examine the force's investigations into the alleged sex offences against Amy in 2003.

It says that passages from police reports published today are "a redacted version of the full rationale" for the decisions taken by officers in the case and fail to take into account the stance of the Crown Prosecution Service.