Four men appear in court as Rhyl child sexual exploitation trial begins

From ITVX and the local newspaper the Rhyl, Prestatyn and Abergele Journal.

Four men from Rhyl have appeared in court after being charged in connection with the sexual exploitation of three teenage girls over a period of two years.

It is the prosecution's case that the girls, aged 16 and under, were targeted by Mustafa Iqbal, Mohamed Arshad, Ziaullah Badshah and Jaswinder Singh, who acted as a grooming gang and used the teens as "sexual playthings", plying them with drink and drugs before sexually abusing them.

A fifth defendant, Sarah Gray from Flintshire is charged with Perverting the course of justice, assisting an offender, conspiracy to supply cocaine to another, and conspiracy to supply cannabis to another.

The defendants deny all the charges against them.

Jurors at Caernarfon Crown Court have been told Child B and C were walking through Rhyl late one spring evening in 2022 when they were spotted by takeaway driver Mustafa Iqbal.

Prosecuting barrister Owen Edwards KC claimed Iqbal, 43, quickly concluded the pair were "ripe for sexual exploitation . . . These men treated the girls as sexual commodities. They took full sexual advantage."

It is claimed the four men in the dock Mustafa Iqbal, Mohamed Arshad, Ziaullah Badshah and Jaswinder Singh were “friends who shared details of what they could get the girls to do” in exchange for drugs.

Arrests were made when one of the alleged victims – Child B, a 15-year-old, was taken to London by defendant Jaswinder Singh and told to pretend to be his 22-year-old carer.

The 65-year-old ordered her to do this “to avoid his sister concluding he was part of an Asian grooming gang”, the court heard.

However, upon meeting Child B, another girl quickly decided she needed protection and the prosecution say “her intervention and that of her mother got police involved”.

Live feed from the Journal on Day One.

And today, Day 2

Mohamed Arshad, Mustafa Iqbal and Ziaullah Badshah are all charged with raping and trafficking the girl, known as Child B.

They appeared at Caernarfon Crown Court today (April 21), alongside co-defendants Jaswinder Singh and Sarah Gray, for the second day of their trial.

Today, jurors were shown police interviews from Child B, one of three alleged child victims in the case.

In her interviews, Child B told police she had been driven to London by Singh three days earlier . . . During that trip, she said, “it sunk in that what I was doing was wrong,” and she began to fear that the plan was to kidnap her.

Child B added: “I shouldn’t be lying about my age. I shouldn’t be hanging around older people just to get cannabis.”

She also told police that she performed a sex act on Iqbal, who “scared me” and who she “really didn’t like”. But she said she “didn’t really want to,” and that it made her feel “gross”.

The girl added that she had sex with Badshah “like four times” in his bedroom, and that he would ask her for sex after she had smoked cannabis. Badshah, she said, was “horrible”.

Child B said she had sexual contact with Arshad at Iqbal’s home, at the Rhyl café which he ran, and in Iqbal’s car.

“I was manipulated and told I was mature,” she said.

All four men are accused of trafficking offences, while Gray’s charges include perverting the course of justice and assisting an offender (in relation to another alleged victim).

The trial resumes on Thursday.

I hope the local newspaper is able and permitted to continue reporting regularly. Rhyl is a seaside town on the north Wales coast, popular with Liverpudlians. Like many of our seaside resorts it has seen better days but whenever I have visted there I have had a good time and found the people friendly and welcoming.