

MP joins debate on grooming gangs after EDL founder Tommy Robinson came to Barrow

From the [Ipswich Star](#)

This Wednesday in Parliament, I led a debate on an incredibly sobering issue which demands justice in our country.

Fortunately, in Ipswich, grooming gangs has not been an issue which has blighted our town as it has done northern towns like Rotherham, Rochdale and Telford. *It's sporadic in Ipswich, same as Chelmsford, one girl and three men here, one girl and another three or four men there. Dealt with locally, only local people hear of it.*

However, the appalling crimes that we saw taking place in those towns are just the tip of the iceberg in what is a country-wide problem.

I believe it's clear that the reason grooming gangs have not been dealt with is due to political correctness from officials – the local authorities, police, and the CPS – who have decided to sweep the problem under the rug instead of facing uncomfortable truths.

The Home Office did release a report on Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in December. But I believe that the report shows that there is a lot more work to do.

Sajid Javid pushed for the review as home secretary in July 2018, pledging that there would be “no no-go areas of inquiry”. He said he would “not let cultural or political sensitivities get in the way of understanding the problem and doing something about it”.

When it eventually did come out, however, many survivors felt that the pushback he received from civil servants resulted in a report that has failed to investigate key issues to do with the make-up and mentality of grooming gangs.

Ahead of the debate, I touched base with the petition creator and some of the survivors of this appalling crime. It's clear that many of the survivors believe they were targeted specifically because of their ethnic and cultural background. Often these gangs would use their victim's perceived 'western-ness' to justify their degrading treatment and abuse of these young girls over many years. Some were targeted from as young as 12.

We must of course ward off any form of extremism from people who might wish to weaponise this issue against certain minority groups in this country.

However, we should be unflinching in recognising that those convicted of these crimes in Rotherham were predominantly British-Pakistani men.

And we must get to grips with the motivations behind these particular gangs, the way they weaponised shame, justified their perverse actions to recruit others, to prey on vulnerable young girls. . . Although I'm not in the Home Office, it seems to me that she (Home Secretary Priti Patel) received a lot of pushback from civil servants inside her own department who were concerned about cultural sensitivities. . .

This is not good enough. For too long these victims have been let down by the establishment. Both at local and national level. Too often those with knowledge have been too scared of speaking out for fear of being branded a racist. This must not be allowed to happen going forward. Clearly, it is totally wrong for different communities to

be stigmatised and we must always guard against racism, but we cannot sweep difficult issues under the carpet.

Back to the Independent: Conservative MP Sir John Hayes called the report a “study in obfuscation” and called for action on known modus operandi for grooming gangs, such as the use of taxis to find and pick up victims.

*The [reprehensible...individual cases](#) do not mean an epidemic (how many cases **does** it take to make an epidemic?) or a cover-up. We’ve got a burning need to restore the faith in processes.”*

Last May, far-right campaigner Tommy Robinson joined [Not Guilty in November](#) and thankfully was granted bail as her trial won’t be heard until August.

Cumbria Police’s head of crime and safeguarding, Detective Chief Superintendent Dean Holden, said pushing political agendas in abuse cases can ‘seriously impede’ police investigations.

Meanwhile the Commissioner of Cumbria Police has issued guidance to parents through [Telegraph and Argus](#) scared of the racism tag

She said that evidence was taken on grooming in September and October, and a report would be published in autumn. Ms Atkins said the Home Office report on grooming gang characteristics was “by no means the end of our work on this issue” and the Home Office hoped to improve data collection, including on the ethnicity of offenders.