

Rochdale grooming trial collapsed over contents of jury WhatsApp group

I was following this trial and posting updates [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#) until last month when I heard the jury had been discharged. Now I know why.

From the [Manchester Evening News](#)



A trial into alleged historic sexual offences in Rochdale collapsed following concerns over the contents of a WhatsApp group set up by jurors, it can now be reported.

Proceedings, at Minshull Street Crown Court in Manchester, had been progressing for almost two months, before a judge discharged the jury in December 2025. Six men deny a series of historic allegations, including rape, alleged to have been committed against three girls in the town.

They are are now set to face a re-trial in August. Reporting restrictions were imposed by a judge preventing disclosure of the reason behind the jury being discharged.

But following a legal submission by the *Manchester Evening News*, the reasons behind the jury being discharged can now be revealed. Defence barristers applied to halt the trial after it emerged that jurors had discussed a broadcast about 'grooming gangs' in a WhatsApp group they had set up.

One member of the jury alerted the judge to the matter, with an investigation then being launched.

The juror who alerted the court handed over his phone to the judge so that he could examine messages within the group. Within the chat, two members of the jury had said they were intending on watching the broadcast.

When questioned, the jurors said they hadn't actually watched the broadcast. But there were claims that the pair had not been telling the truth.

Defence barristers in the trial argued that it was 'clear' from screenshots of messages that 'jurors have researched material about grooming gangs'. There were also claims that they had done so while knowing that it was contrary to the judge's directions.

One of the jurors was said to have written that watching the broadcast would be 'contrary to the judge's directions'. Another was said to have replied: "I'm going to watch it anyway," followed by a 'smiley face emoji'.

Lawyers claimed there were 'real concerns that this jury were not following the directions'.

The judge said: "Having taken time to reflect, I take the view that inherent in the suggested course of action itself is the creation of an unacceptable and lingering suggestion of

wrongdoing by one or more jurors, which as a consequence of the proposed course of action suggested by the Crown itself becomes an insoluble difficulty. . . questioning, which must happen in open court, would itself undermine the credibility of the jurors being questioned, give them as jurors cause to question the court process, including myself and their role, so as to be self-defeating.

. . . whatever course of action I take, unanswered questions remain. And in light of that, no course of action that I can reasonably take can cure the position that now exists because of these multi-layered difficulties.”

He said that the juror who had ‘very properly’ raised the issue was now in an ‘untenable’ position, and could also no longer serve. on the jury.

[Judge Corbett-Jones](#) ... granted defence applications to discharge the jury after they argued there were “real concerns” they may not follow legal directions in the future.

Tahir Rashid, 54, from Rochdale; Mohammed Saleem, 46, from Rochdale; Iftaq Hussain, 45, of Shawforth; and Sucklane Shah, 46, of no fixed abode, all deny rape.

Arshad Mohammed, 55, of Rochdale, denies rape and assault by penetration, while Amjad Mahmood, 53, of Rochdale, denies rape, indecent assault, indecency with a child and assault by penetration.

Rashid has also pleaded not guilty to the rape of another young girl in the late 1980s.