# Former Northern Ireland teacher jailed for breaching internet ban by using public libraries



## Former Teacher and Child Sex Offender Refused Bail After Breaching Internet Ban

A High Court judge has ruled that a former teacher and convicted child sex offender must remain in custody after allegations surfaced that he used public libraries to circumvent a court-sanctioned ban on computer access. This case sheds light on ongoing challenges around the enforcement of Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPOs) in Northern Ireland, particularly concerning the usage of public spaces for illicit activities.

Andrew George Tinsley, a 48-year-old from Co Down, had previously been sentenced to one year in prison for breaching his SOPO. Convicted in June 2021 for possessing voyeuristic and indecent images, Tinsley was explicitly prohibited from accessing computers or the internet without prior approval. Despite this, he reportedly visited multiple libraries across Northern Ireland, including locations in Armagh, Banbridge, and Belfast, from November 2022 to February 2023. Although Tinsley claimed these activities had been sanctioned by his designated risk manager, court testimony refuted this assertion, revealing a pattern of deliberate rule-breaking that ultimately led to his incarceration and an extended SOPO until June 2026.

The case of Tinsley resonates with other incidents involving sex offenders breaching internet restrictions. For example, Keith Edward Skillen, a 59-year-old offender from Whitehaven, received a 16-month sentence for using Facebook and Instagram on a library computer, thus violating his own Sexual Harm Prevention Order. Skillen's arrest was notable for the aggravating factor that he had actively circumvented monitoring measures put in place at his home, demonstrating that the challenge of enforcing internet bans is not isolated.

Moreover, the involvement of vigilante groups in exposing online predators has become increasingly prevalent. The case of Kevin Ward, a 51-year-old from Great Yarmouth, illustrates this trend. He was apprehended while attempting to groom young girls online at a library and was sentenced to 18 months for his actions. This highlights an alarming use of public facilities as a staging ground for potential predatory behaviour.

The judicial system's response to breaches of such orders has raised concerns among child protection advocates. Jim Gamble, a prominent child safety expert, has been vocal about perceived leniency in sentencing for internet-related sex crimes. He specifically criticised cases where offenders received relatively light penalties, questioning whether current judicial practices effectively deter potential offenders. Gamble's intention to address these shortcomings with the Justice Minister underscores a growing call for more stringent legal consequences as a means to fortify protections for children.

The implications of these repeated breaches extend beyond individual offenders; they highlight systemic vulnerabilities in safeguarding children from potential harm in public settings. As various cases reveal, the use of public libraries by sex offenders to evade restrictions poses pressing questions about compliance, supervision, and the need for better strategies to protect children from predatory behaviour.

In summary, the ruling against Tinsley serves as both a warning and a reflection of broader societal challenges. As public libraries remain accessible to all, ensuring they are safe havens for children necessitates a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to monitoring and enforcing legal restrictions imposed on offenders.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/courts/former-teacher-and-child-sex-offender-refused-bail-after-using-public-libraries-to-flout-internet-ban/a858436677.html), [[2]](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/paedophile-jailed-for-repeatedly-going-to-libraries-across-ni-to-use-internet/a298173786.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/paedophile-jailed-for-repeatedly-going-to-libraries-across-ni-to-use-internet/a298173786.html), [[4]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-cumbria-60348829)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-44689549), [[7]](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/ni-child-safety-expert-claims-judiciary-failing-to-deter-perpetrators-of-online-sex-crimes-through-leniency-of-sentencing/41027718.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/ni-child-safety-expert-claims-judiciary-failing-to-deter-perpetrators-of-online-sex-crimes-through-leniency-of-sentencing/41027718.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/ni-child-safety-expert-claims-judiciary-failing-to-deter-perpetrators-of-online-sex-crimes-through-leniency-of-sentencing/41027718.html), [[2]](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/paedophile-jailed-for-repeatedly-going-to-libraries-across-ni-to-use-internet/a298173786.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/courts/former-teacher-and-child-sex-offender-refused-bail-after-using-public-libraries-to-flout-internet-ban/a858436677.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/paedophile-jailed-for-repeatedly-going-to-libraries-across-ni-to-use-internet/a298173786.html> - Andrew George Tinsley, a 48-year-old former car salesman from Co Down, was sentenced to one year in prison for repeatedly breaching his Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO) by accessing computers in public libraries across Northern Ireland. Convicted in June 2021 for possessing voyeuristic and indecent images, Tinsley was prohibited from accessing computers or the internet without prior approval. Between November 2022 and February 2023, he visited libraries in Armagh, Ballynahinch, Banbridge, Belfast, Lisburn, Lurgan, Newry, and Portadown to use their computers, actions he claimed were approved by his designated risk manager, a claim the DRM denied. The court emphasized the deliberate and repeated nature of his breaches, leading to his imprisonment and continued SOPO until June 2026.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-44689549> - Kevin Ward, a 51-year-old from Great Yarmouth, was jailed for 18 months after admitting to attempting to groom young girls online. He was apprehended by the vigilante group Internet Interceptors at the town's library, where he believed he was meeting a child he had been communicating with online. Ward pleaded guilty to six counts of grooming children for sexual activity and was also placed on the sex offenders register for 10 years. The case highlights the role of vigilante groups in exposing online predators and the use of public spaces like libraries for illicit activities.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-cumbria-60348829> - Keith Edward Skillen, a 59-year-old child sex offender from Whitehaven, was sentenced to 16 months in prison for breaching a court order by accessing social media sites on a library computer. Previously banned from internet access, Skillen used Facebook and Instagram at Whitehaven Library, violating his Sexual Harm Prevention Order. Arrested with his library card in possession, Skillen's actions were deemed an aggravating feature, as he circumvented monitoring devices at home. The case underscores the challenges in enforcing internet bans and the use of public facilities to bypass restrictions.
5. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/stay-away-from-libraries-judges-order-to-incurable-sex-offender-after-loitering-case-is-dropped/30667782.html> - Ian Patrick Magill, a 66-year-old from Downpatrick, was ordered to stay away from libraries after a loitering charge was dropped. Previously accused of breaching his lifelong Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO) by observing children near Newcastle library, Magill was found not guilty when the prosecution offered no evidence. Instead, he was subject to a restraining order barring him from libraries. Judge Piers Grant warned Magill of the consequences of breaching the order, emphasizing the need to 'keep away from children.' The case highlights the legal measures taken to protect children from potential offenders in public spaces.
6. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/courts/coleraine-sex-offender-accused-of-breaching-order-at-town-library/a737988538.html> - Harold Burke, a convicted sex offender, appeared in Coleraine Magistrates Court accused of breaching his Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO) by loitering in his local library. The single charge against him was confirmed via videolink from police custody. The case underscores the vigilance required in monitoring sex offenders and the importance of adhering to court-imposed restrictions to ensure public safety.
7. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/ni-child-safety-expert-claims-judiciary-failing-to-deter-perpetrators-of-online-sex-crimes-through-leniency-of-sentencing/41027718.html> - Child protection expert Jim Gamble criticized the Northern Ireland judiciary for being lenient in sentencing individuals convicted of downloading indecent images of children. Referencing the case of 76-year-old Charles Beggs, who received a two-year probation order after pleading guilty to 14 charges of making indecent images, Gamble expressed concerns over the adequacy of such sentences in deterring online sex crimes. He plans to write to the Justice Minister to outline his concerns, emphasizing the need for more stringent penalties to protect children and deter potential offenders.