# Groomed: a National Scandal explores the complex issue of grooming gangs in the UK



A new Channel 4 documentary, Groomed: A National Scandal, airing on Wednesday 30 April, explores the complex and deeply troubling issue of grooming gangs across the UK. The programme centres on the testimonies of five women who have survived grooming and abuse, while also examining the contentious debates surrounding the convictions of alleged perpetrators.

The documentary includes footage from a campaign group called Fighting For Fair Trials, which argues that many men convicted in grooming gang cases have been wrongly imprisoned. The group’s organiser, Samira Khan, whose brother Irfan Khan was sentenced to 12 years in prison last year for multiple rape offences, expressed her disapproval of derogatory language used by some supporters against alleged victims. Speaking to MailOnline, she said, “The group has used abusive words online, I agree with that. The thing is, I can't be sat 24/7 on my phone going through what people are saying - I can't control what comes out of everyone's mouths.”

Despite condemning offensive remarks such as “dirty b***\*es,” “lying b***\*es,” and “sick cow” targeted at young female victims, Khan defended the right of some supporters to dispute the truthfulness of certain accusations. “Just the way some of the victims are angry, what do you think these families are feeling – are they not allowed to show their emotions, say how they're feeling, if some of these girls are recruiting other girls to come forward?” she added.

The Fighting For Fair Trials group has an active presence on social media platforms including TikTok and Facebook, where it advocates for individuals it believes have been falsely accused of grooming offences. A post on its TikTok account, viewed more than 24,000 times, claims that false allegations are “far from ‘extremely rare’” and suggests that some accusers are motivated by financial incentives, stating: “Advertising offering thousands of pounds is commonplace on social media.” The campaign argues that courts often rely on hearsay rather than concrete evidence in such cases.

The documentary also features a recorded phone call with Irfan Khan, heard complaining about his imprisonment and asserting his innocence while referring to the large number of men from Dewsbury jailed during recent crackdowns. Khan said, “Since I’ve been inside there’s been so many come inside all of a sudden – it’s been like a domino. Half of Dewsbury’s inside. And it’s really unfair – you know, it’s just unfair. I’ve done nothing wrong and I’ve sat here for 15 months.” Samira Khan said her brother had made the call from a prison landline, dismissing suggestions that he had broken prison rules by possessing a mobile phone.

The background to these convictions is Operation Tourway, a prolonged investigation by West Yorkshire Police which led to the arrest of 24 men accused of raping, sexually abusing, and trafficking eight young girls in the North Kirklees area, including Batley and Dewsbury, over a period spanning 1999 to 2012. The men were tried in separate proceedings at Leeds Crown Court between 2022 and 2024 and collectively received lengthy prison sentences amounting to hundreds of years. Authorities described the abuse as “abhorrent in the extreme.”

The programme places the perspective of the victims front and centre, with two survivors identified as Chantelle and Jade choosing to waive their anonymity and appear on screen to share their experiences.

The issue of grooming gangs has been subject to intense scrutiny and debate in recent years. High-profile cases such as those in Rochdale revealed systemic failings by police and local authorities in protecting vulnerable children, predominantly white girls from deprived backgrounds. An official report in January 2023 detailed these failings, highlighting missed opportunities for intervention during the period 2004 to 2013. Similar evaluations in Manchester and Oldham reiterated concerns about the inadequacy of authorities’ responses.

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse, whose final report was published in 2022, described the sexual exploitation of children as a widespread “epidemic” with profound consequences for tens of thousands of victims. A Home Office study published in 2020 noted that child sexual abuse gangs were most commonly composed of white men, adding complexity to the public discourse.

In response to the grooming scandals, the Home Office told the documentary makers it acknowledged the crisis as “one of the greatest failures in our country's history” and announced a rapid national audit to better understand the true scale of grooming gangs, including an examination of ethnic composition.

The documentary Groomed: A National Scandal is scheduled to air on Channel 4 at 9pm on Wednesday 30 April. It aims to present a multifaceted view of an issue that has elicited strong emotions and significant controversy, highlighting the experiences of victims while also exploring challenges faced by those who question the justice of some convictions.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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