



## The Rotherham report- an alternative view response.

It is with a heavy heart that I read the recently published article The Rotherham inquiry- An alternative view

Honestly, after seeing the responses the article received from readers on social media I was expecting it to be an unpleasant article, what I wasn't expecting was it to read like an all out victim blaming jamboree.

Instead of focusing on the abusers and the failure of authorities to keep these children safe, the article focuses on the behaviour of some of the victims, some of the most difficult to read quotes being

- They did get help and support
- Children who were, on the whole- out of control
- It is extraordinarily difficult to help children who are on a 'self destruct' mission
- There are young people who place themselves in danger but they may not see it this way
- When does 'befriending' a young person become 'grooming'

Here we see something that is unfortunately not uncommon. Girls and women being held at least partially responsible for the abuse that they suffered at the hands of men. It's something we can read daily in all different situations if we do an internet search or pick up a newspaper. 'Maybe she shouldn't have put herself in that situation,' 'Maybe she shouldn't have been so self-destructive', 'Maybe she needs to take responsibility for her own actions'. There is only a very fine line between saying these things and saying 'Maybe it was her fault'.

The post mentions that many of the children abused did get help and support from an agency set up to help children who might be at risk from sexual exploitation and that many of these children were 'out of control' This was apparently was 'not intended to blame them, just to understand the context in which their abuse happened.' These children were not abused because they were out of control and self destructive, they didn't ask for it with their actions or fail to guard themselves effectively against those who would wish to do them harm. These children were hurt because the abusers decided to hurt them and because they were able to gain close enough access to their victims to be able to do so.

I noticed that the author also seemed to have a little trouble understanding grooming- a quick internet search show that almost every online dictionary has two separate definitions in regards to the grooming of a person, the examples from Collins Dictionary being 'To train or prepare for a particular task, occupation', etc and 'To win the confidence of (a victim) in order to a commit sexual assault on him or her'. They are two very, very different things. Befriending a child becomes grooming when the adult has the intent of winning their trust so they can abuse them. There is no reason to sit and philosophically muse over this- I would assume (as I'm sure many people would) that the authorities put in place specifically to protect those at risk of being groomed and abused would be able to effectively spot the differences between the two when faced with it.

According to the article, the social workers department wishes to keep all children from harm,



even if this isn't realistically possible, if this is true I would suggest that they don't blame the ones that they couldn't protect. With the general feel of the article being 'It wasn't our fault, it wasn't our fault, it wasn't our fault' I would have expected the author to lay the blame on the abusers. They were mentioned, very briefly, inbetween the claims the children were putting themselves in dangerous situations and the frankly confusing bit about children's involvement in sexual behaviour needing to be placed in 'A wider context'

This was not a 'moral panic' this was another terrifying example of what abusers do to people and the fact that the victims behaviour is being scrutinized will not stop these events from happening again, all it does is blame girls and women for the things that men decide to do to them. In fact, the author seemed more concerned about the way the media handled the reports of the abuse than she did about the children who were victims. That the abusers were mainly described as 'Asian men' that the media used highly emotive language when reporting the abuse. She even went as far as to say she is worried about the negative implications for men in general that arise from the Rotherham report.

These victims should not have to fight anymore- they shouldn't be made to feel as if they were responsible for the atrocities committed against them. The simple fact is that these children were failed, and it is unjustifiable to try and blame that on them.