

Convicted sex offender, caught in an undercover police sting, has sentence increased

A Cumbrian man has been immediately imprisoned after the Attorney General's Office referred his original sentence to the Court of Appeal.

Thomas Thompson, 58, groomed a 13-year old girl who he met in an online chat room. Thompson had made overtures to several underage girls, and other users who sent him indecent images of children. The young girl confirmed that she was only 13 years old, and the online conversation soon turned sexual. They arranged to meet near Derby on 15 May 2021, planning to engage in sexual intercourse.

Thompson was in fact communicating with an undercover police officer and was arrested on his arrival at a retail park near Derby. He was charged with one count of arranging or facilitating the commission of a child sex offence, one count of attempting to meet a child following sexual grooming and two counts of making indecent images of children (B & C Categories).

Thompson pleaded guilty prior to his trial, and on 16 July 2021 he was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment suspended for 2 years, with an unpaid work requirement for 200 hours and 30 days of rehabilitation activity.

Following the decision at Carlisle Crown Court, Thompson's case was referred to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme. On 28 September 2021, the Court found his sentence to be unduly lenient and increased it to 2 years and 6 months' immediate imprisonment.

This is the latest in a series of cases which have seen offenders' sentences increased following a decision by the Court of Appeal that, in cases where the offender had been talking to an adult posing as a child, the sentence must reflect the offenders illegal intentions.

After the hearing at the Court of Appeal, the newly appointed Solicitor General, Alex Chalk QC MP, said:

Thompson's actions were predatory and premeditated, and fuelled child sexual abuse. Good police work stopped him in his tracks, and should serve as a warning to those thinking of grooming underage victims in cyberspace. I am pleased that the Court of Appeal has seen fit to increase his sentence.