

Coventry sex offender handed immediate prison term

A sex offender has had his sentence increased following an intervention by the Solicitor General, the Rt Hon Lucy Frazer QC MP.

Martyn Croucher, 63, engaged in sexual communication online for a number of months with someone he believed to be a 13 year old girl. He was instead communicating with an adult decoy from an online group targeting suspected paedophiles. He sent the 'child' several sexual images and arranged to meet, with the intention of abusing her.

During the subsequent police investigation, it was discovered that he was also engaging in sexual communications with someone he believed to be another young girl, aged 12, but who was in fact a decoy police officer.

Croucher pleaded guilty to attempting to engage in sexual communications with a child and attempting to cause a child to engage in sexual activity. On 3 June 2021, he was sentenced to 6 months' imprisonment, suspended for 18 months at Warwick Crown Court.

Following the Court's decision, the Solicitor General referred Croucher's case to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme. On 28 July 2021, the Court found his sentence to be unduly lenient and handed down an immediate prison term of 3 years.

After the hearing at the Court of Appeal the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Lucy Frazer QC MP, said:

"Croucher's intentions were deeply disturbing, engaging in sexual communications for a prolonged period with what he thought were two young girls. It is important that his sentence reflects the gravity of his crimes, and I am pleased that he will now face a term of imprisonment."

The Court of Appeal has decided that where a defendant sets out to sexually abuse a child, but in circumstances where the child happens to be an adult posing as a child, then the starting point for sentencing should be set by reference to the harm that the defendant intended to cause the fictional child. The fact that there was no real child for the defendant to abuse will then be reflected in a downward movement from that starting point. The extent of that reduction will be a matter for the court in individual cases to decide.