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Serial Rapist to Be Freed After Two Decades Behind Bars Despite Victim's Plea

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— Categories: Crime



Alan Blackwell, a serial rapist who inflicted years of terror on teenage girls and women, is set to walk free from prison.

The decision by a Parole Board panel to grant Blackwell parole, after more than two decades behind bars, has deeply unsettled at least one of his courageous victims.

Blackwell's horrifying spree of attacks led to his life imprisonment in 2004, following convictions for three brutal sexual assaults, some of which had remained unsolved for years.

It was only through the tireless work of cold case detectives and the incredible breakthroughs in DNA technology that these disturbing crimes were finally linked to him.

His initial eligibility for parole came in March 2014, and in the years that followed, he made five attempts to secure his freedom, each one thankfully blocked due to the clear and present risks he continued to pose.

This time, however, the Parole Board's decision has gone unchallenged by the Justice Secretary, paving the way for Blackwell's return to society in the coming weeks. A spokesperson for the Parole Board explained that their focus rests squarely on whether a prisoner's risk to the public can be safely managed in the community. They consistently stressed the meticulous care taken in these parole reviews, with public protection at the forefront.

The charges against Blackwell include a truly terrifying assault on a 19-year-old woman in South Shields back in 1994. The survivor bravely recounted to *The Chronicle* how she was suddenly grabbed from behind, dragged down an embankment, and had her clothes ripped away. This nightmare went cold for years until DNA evidence, uncovered after his arrest for a different attack, finally connected him to that traumatic night.

In 1997, Blackwell was handed a 14-year sentence for the rape of a 12-year-old schoolgirl in Washington. During this harrowing ordeal, he bound and gagged his young victim and was reportedly dressed in women's clothes.

It was the painstaking work of Northumbria Police's Operation Phoenix cold case team, revisiting this very attack, that allowed them to harness advanced DNA testing techniques and finally tie Blackwell to the earlier 1994 South Shields assault.

The parole panel had previously highlighted a number of deeply concerning risk factors that suggested Blackwell was highly likely to re-offend. These included the chilling revelation that he "found children sexually attractive, believed it was acceptable to sexually abuse children, preferred sex to include violence, thought about sex a great deal, and felt he had the right to sex whenever he desired it."

Prison Progress

However, the panel also considered evidence of Blackwell's strides while incarcerated. A summary of the hearing detailed his completion of numerous approved programmes aimed at confronting sexual offending, improving decision-making, and fostering healthier ways of thinking.

It was also noted that he had dedicated considerable effort to retaining and applying the skills he had supposedly learned. Furthermore, he had been moved to open prison conditions and had completed a series of temporary release programmes, which are often a precursor to full parole.

The woman attacked by Blackwell in South Shields has already shared her profound dread about his impending freedom with the Chronicle.

The mother expressed her heartfelt belief that a "life sentence" should genuinely mean life behind bars, declaring with raw emotion, "This man should never be released."