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Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, corporate director of People and Communities at Peterborough City Council, said: "We are pleased with this verdict today as it represents justice for the girls and young women who suffered at the hands of this vicious criminal.

"I would like to start by paying tribute to those girls and young women. Without their courage to take the witness stand and relive some absolutely horrendous experiences at the hands of this criminal we could not have got the result we did today.

"It is because of their courage that this vicious criminal was convicted and this means that other women and girls are safer in our city.

"Today is an important day for these young women. It is important because they have been believed. And because of this they can now get on with their lives and properly begin their recovery. That recovery may take a long time but we will help and support them in every way we can.

"I would also like to pay tribute to our social workers and the police. We all wish these girls could have been saved sooner, who would not? But it was not until our social workers and the police won the girls trust so that they felt they could tell us what was really happening to them that the police could make arrests and we were able to begin supporting them properly.

"What was different in Peterborough is that having followed other places like Rotherham and Oxford we knew we must have child sexual exploitation in our city. So along with the police we went out looking for it, and when we did we found it; and where we found it we took decisive action which has led to today's conviction and the others we have secured over the last 18 months."