

Ten-year-olds charged with sex crimes

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HUNDREDS of 10-year-old children were charged with crimes last year, including serious sexual offences, robbery, actual bodily harm and assaulting a police officer.

In Lancashire a 10-year-old boy was arrested in May 2005 for raping a young girl with another boy. The 10-year-old was later charged with “aiding and abetting” her rape and engaging in “penetrative sexual activity” with the girl. The case will be heard in a youth court next year.

It is one of at least three sexual offences committed by 10-year-olds where the police pressed charges, according to details released under the Freedom of Information Act by 27 of the 43 police forces in England and Wales.

Experts say the real number of sexual crimes committed by primary school children may be much higher as many victims are too afraid to tell anyone they have been attacked.

“I think this is just the tip of the iceberg and a large proportion start offending from as young as eight or nine,” said Julia Davidson, principal lecturer in criminology at Westminster University and an expert on child crime.

“Some may have been abused themselves in a family or peer environment and copy that kind of behaviour, which makes it largely a hidden offence,” she said.

The details of these crimes have been released as an 11-year-old boy is due to appear at Preston crown court this week charged with two offences of rape and two counts of attempted rape of an eight-year-old girl in Blackpool last April. If found guilty, he would be one of the youngest people in Britain to be convicted of rape.

Among the other sexual offences released to The Sunday Times last week, a 10-year-old boy in Burnley was arrested in October last year for rape and charged with the assault “of a girl under 13 by touching”.

Another boy in south Wales was sentenced to a three-month “action plan order” after being charged with a sexual offence.

The figures released by police forces show that about 270 children aged 10 were charged with criminal offences between April 2005 and March this year.

While most of the charges were for criminal damage and shoplifting offences, they also included more than 50 assaults and 12 robberies.

The most recent figures from the Youth Justice Board show that nationally between 2003/4 and 2004/5, violent offences by 10-year-olds rose 33%.