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1993: Two boys charged with toddler's murder

Two 10-year-old boys have been charged with the abduction and murder of two-year-old James Bulger in Liverpool.

The toddler went missing from the Strand Shopping Centre in Bootle last Friday and his body was found on a railway embankment less than three miles away two days later, on 14 February.

The two suspects were arrested two days ago and are being held at different police stations with their mothers and lawyers.

When they appear before South Sefton Magistrates Court - a quarter of a mile from where James was abducted - tomorrow, they will be among the youngest people to face murder charges in the British courts.

Other members of the boys' families have been moved to secret addresses to protect them from possible reprisals.

Police issued a statement saying the pair had also been charged - at 1840GMT - with the attempted abduction of another two-year-old and were being held in police detention under section 59 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

It looks likely they will be remanded into some form of care or custody before the case is tried by a judge and jury at crown court.

Officers are consulting the local council over the welfare of the boys.

Grieving for Jamie

Bulger family solicitor Sean Sexton said: "The family are of course relieved at the progress that has been made. They are still trying to come to terms with the situation."

"We should like to thank the police and public for their support," he continued, asking for the privacy of the family to be respected and

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Jamie was last seen on CCTV in the Strand Shopping Centre, Bootle

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Reaction in Liverpool to the Bulger murder

Timeline: James Bulger Killers

20 Feb 1993	Two boys charged with toddler's murder
22 Feb 1993	Two boys in court over Bulger murder
24 Nov 1993	Venables and Thompson sentenced to eight years
12 Jun 1997	Straw to reconsider Bulger killers' fate
2000s	
08 Jan 2001	Bulger killers win anonymity for life

In Context

The two boys, Jon Venables and Robert Thompson, were convicted of abducting and murdering James Bulger at Preston crown court in November 1993.

Justice Morland sentenced them both to eight years.

Lord Chief Justice Taylor raised the sentence to 10 years and Home Secretary Michael Howard put it up to 15, although the House of Lords ruled he had acted outside his powers in 1998.

In 1999 the case went to the European Court on Human Rights as lawyers claimed Venables and

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saying there would be no further statement.

Thompson should not have been tried in an adult court.

Hundreds of flowers have been heaped around the entrance to the shopping centre where James was last seen, on security video, being led away.

The Parole Board recommended the pair be freed, as they were no longer a danger to society, in June 2001.

And over £7,000 of public donations has been collected and given to the Bulger family.

It ruled their identities should remain secret because of the threat of harm against them.

The 35,000 people at Liverpool Football Club's Anfield ground stood for a minute's silence before the game against Ipswich Town today.

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20 ▾

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