18th August 2005

Charity’s fear over rape lie

The cordoned off alleyway in Chippenham guarded by police after the girl claimed she had been raped. A women's helpline charity fears a 16-year-old girl's lie about being raped could make it harder for real victims to report their crime.

The Chippenham teenager has now been cautioned by police after after admitting she made up the attack in the alleyway between Market Place and St Andrews churchyard in the town.

She said she lied because she was afraid she was pregnant.

A spokesman for the Rape and Sexual Abuse counselling Centre said bogus claims put back its work.

She said women who lied made it more difficult for others as in some areas police were often sceptical to begin with.

"Police still aren't as sympathetic as they could be because they have to be sure the women are telling the truth," she said.

"It's a very personal thing and if you've got a male police officer who's not sympathetic then it can make our ladies feel even more victimised, like the criminal or perpetrator.

"It's something we're fighting against and bogus claims do not help the cause."

Her action was also condemned by Keith Lawrence, whose son had to endure a rape trial in 2002 after another girl claimed he had raped her.

The case was dropped because of a lack of evidence.
Mr Lawrence, of Ashe Crescent, Chippenham, said: "In that case the girl was 100 per cent wrong and she was here too."

In the latest case, the girl claimed she was attacked just before 1am on Sunday June 19.

Over the next two days ten uniformed officers, members of CID and forensics combed the area and interviewed scores of people in relation to the report. Passers-by were stopped from walking down the alleyway and had to use the path running alongside the church for most of the morning and into the evening, while forensic tests were carried out.

The girl was examined by police surgeons at a special rape unit.

She named her alleged attacker and officers were ready to arrest and charge a local man with her rape.

The girl was given a formal warning for perverting the course of justice but Insp Neil Bagnall of Chippenham police said had she been an adult she would have been charged and gone before a court.

Insp Bagnall, who worked on the case from 7am until 10pm on that Monday said at the time she should have known the difference between right and wrong.

Talking after the file was eventually closed, he said: "An extensive police investigation did take place, the result of which was that a serious sexual assault did not occur."

He has urged victims not to be put off reporting similar incidents in light of these cases.

He said: "We do continue to view these types of offences very seriously and would always encourage females or males to report them but we will look to prosecute those who waste police time."

Mr Lawrence said his son wanted to forget all about the nightmare he went through and is now settled in a full time job and a loving relationship. At the time the man, a self-employed plasterer told the Gazette how his life was made a living hell as he lost his lodgings and work.

His father said: "A lot of girls do genuinely get raped and it's the most evil crime in the world, but these ones that make it up are the scum of the earth.

"It makes it more difficult for people to believe when those who are telling the truth say they've been raped. Nobody else should go through that."

https://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/7241583.charitys-fear-over-rape-lie/