

Student who falsely claimed rape has jail-sentence appeal rejected

The student confessed she had lied, and was jailed for 15 months at Reading Crown Court in November, last year, after she admitted perverting the course of justice

BY **GETREADING**
08:14, 23 JAN 2014



A student whose false rape claims resulted in one of the Thames Valley Police force's most expensive investigations has been told by top judges she deserved to be sent to prison.

The former Reading University student, who cannot be identified, cried rape after some friends found her looking dishevelled when returning from a night out.

Although the 21-year-old, originally from Birmingham, did not point the finger directly at anyone, the thorough police investigation which followed her claim led to a man being arrested and held overnight until he proved he was elsewhere at the time of the alleged rape.

The investigation continued for around 14 months, and became one of the force's top 10 most expensive investigations – with costs including about £20,000 on forensics and nearly £7,000 on gathering and analysing CCTV footage.

The student eventually confessed she had lied, and was jailed for 15 months at Reading Crown Court in November, last year, after she admitted perverting the course of justice.

Last Thursday she challenged her jail term, with her lawyers arguing it should be suspended in light of her troubled history and evidence which had recently surfaced.

But her appeal was dismissed by top judges, who said that, barring “exceptional circumstances”, anyone committing an offence involving a false allegation of rape must go to prison as their lies undermined justice, wasted police time and risked innocent people being prosecuted.

Describing the case as ‘tragic’, Sir Colin Mackay told the court the young woman, who cannot be named for legal reasons, was seen by a group of friends walking alone as she returned home from a night out in late 2011.

The court heard they were concerned by her appearance and, when they asked what was wrong, she told them she had been raped on the university campus.

Her allegation triggered a huge police investigation and the judge said that, in addition to the money spent on gathering potential evidence, many police man-hours were wasted.

The investigation also resulted in an innocent man being arrested as a result of forensic material found near to where the student claimed she had been raped.

He was never charged but spent a night in police cells before he was able to demonstrate he had been nowhere near the scene at the time of the alleged incident.

The police continued to investigate the case for 14 months before the student finally admitted she had lied.

Lawyers for the woman urged the court to suspend her sentence, saying there was evidence which had surfaced which meant she could be spared the pain of remaining behind bars.

But, dismissing her appeal, Sir Colin said such offences had to be treated seriously and would result in a jail term in all but the 'most exceptional' cases.

Sitting with Lord Justice Jackson and Mr Justice Simon, he added: "The effects on an innocent man of the false allegation were not intended, but must have been devastating for him.

"There is also the fact that such allegations operate so as to reduce the confidence of the public and the criminal justice system in rape victims, who have a genuine allegation to be investigated and dealt with.

"Thirdly, there is the massive waste of police resources and manpower, needed elsewhere for the investigation of genuine crimes. The public interest requires – in all but the most exceptional cases – that a response of immediate custody should be the court's reaction. We are unpersuaded that the contrary is arguable in this case."

<https://www.getreading.co.uk/news/local-news/student-who-falsely-claimed-rape-6554029>