

Woman who falsely cried rape is spared jail

A woman sparked a massive police investigation costing thousands of pounds after falsely claiming she was raped. Lying Sarah Wood 23, from Chadderton, said she had been sexually attacked by two Asian men in Oldham town centre after a night out.

BY **MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS**

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A woman sparked a massive police investigation costing thousands of pounds after falsely claiming she was raped.

Lying Sarah Wood 23, from Chadderton, said she had been sexually attacked by two Asian men in Oldham town centre after a night out.

Police officers were so concerned at her story, that a full-scale inquiry was launched, and a torchlight-search of the supposed scene near to Sainsbury's supermarket was carried out.

Wood was taken to Manchester's St Mary's Hospital where she was given special priority for forensic tests, which cost £3,000 alone.

Hours and hours of police time then went into scrupulously analysing film taken from CCTV cameras in Oldham town centre in the hope of identifying her attackers.

Manchester's Minshull Street Crown Court was told however, that investigating officers began to get more and more suspicious of her story, when they found absolutely nothing to back it up, and eventually it transpired that she had had sex willingly on the night in question, with a man she knew.

Wood, who is six months pregnant, was given a 12 month prison sentence, but was told it will be suspended for a year.

She has also been ordered to carry out 60 hours unpaid work in the community.

Judge Roger Dodds told her: "The only reason that you are not going immediately to prison, is because you did not actually identify anyone by name."

Michael Morley prosecuting, said Wood, from Glebe Street, Chadderton, made her complaint of rape when she turned up at a friend's house in Oldham on March 7 last year, in a dishevelled state.

Her worried pal immediately called the police, and Wood told them that she had been walking home from the town centre when she saw a group of four Asian men near the Sainsbury's store.

She said they had approached her, and two of the men had then in turn raped her, after forcing her to the ground.

Resources and manpower

Mr Morley said forensic tests carried out at St Mary's had been given priority because of the urgency of the situation, and cost £3000 alone, apart from the waste of considerable police resources and manpower.

Officers took Wood back to the alleged crime scene, and later pored over CCTV footage, none of which showed either her, or anyone matching the descriptions of the men she had given.

Mr Morley said she was eventually picked out on security film, emerging from the Vogue club in the town centre with a white man.

Officers managed to trace him, and his DNA matched that of semen recovered from Wood's underclothes.

He said that he knew her, and that they had had consensual sex on the night in question, at his house.

Mr Morley said Wood, who pleaded guilty to a charge of attempting to pervert the course of public justice, had had ample opportunities to retract her story and tell the truth, but had not done so.

When interviewed after her arrest last May, she continued to deny making up her story. She admitted sleeping with the man police had traced, but said it had not happened on the night of the attack, which was "patently untrue" because of forensic evidence.

After the case GMP said they hoped it would not prevent real victims of rape from reporting the crime.

Det Sgt Jason Byrne, from the Sexual Offences Unit at Oldham, said: "Wood repeatedly lied to police, prompting a full and thorough investigation at considerable expense.

"A number of officers spent many hours on this investigation when they could have been better served out in our communities and she has also wasted valuable resources at St Mary's.

"To lie about something as serious as being raped really undermines the awful experiences of

genuine victims.

“I want to stress that we treat all reports of rape extremely seriously and I would hope Wood's foolish and reckless actions do not discourage genuine victims from coming forward.”

Anyone who has been a victim of rape or sexual assault can contact Greater Manchester Police on 0161 872 5050 or 999 in an emergency. St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Manchester, can also be contacted on 0161 276 6515.

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/woman-who-falsely-cried-rape-886326>