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Mum's agony as girl who cried rape is sent to jail

A MOTHER has spoken of her anguish after her daughter was jailed for crying rape - but she admits she expected her to get a longer sentence.

Susan Cottrell and her husband were at Winchester Crown Court on Monday when her 22-year-old daughter Debbie, of Mozart Close, Brighton Hill, was sent to prison for six months for attempting to pervert the course of justice by falsely claiming she had been raped.

She pleaded guilty to the charge and asked for four other similar offences involving false allegations of rape, attempted rape, indecent assault and attempted robbery to be taken into consideration.

Her mother told The Gazette: "I don't think the sentence was harsh. I expected it to be a longer sentence. But obviously it's the end of our world.

"I was hoping she would get probation as it was her first offence. She has had a number of problems. Yes, she did wrong but we are the innocent ones trying to support our daughter.

"If she had received probation she would have got more help. This way she will get no help - that's the harsh part." Basingstoke police hope Cottrell's sentence will deter other people from making false crime claims.

Detective Constable Brad Wanless, the officer in the case, said: "Over the past year we have been subject to a disproportionate amount of false and malicious allegations of sexual offences. There have been a number of false claims of rape and other sexual crimes and several females have been cautioned for similar things to this case.

"We are pleased at the outcome of the case. It demonstrates that this kind of thing can lead to people being jailed if they lie."

Sentencing Cottrell - whose allegations led to two men being interviewed by the police - Judge Thomas Longbotham said: "It's a terrible thing for a person to be falsely accused of a serious crime knowing that if convicted they could go to prison for many years - plus all the social and personal consequences which inevitably go with such allegations."

Miss Adrienne Knight, defending, said psychiatric tests had shown Cottrell was not suffering from a treatable mental illness but had a personality disorder. She described her client as immature with no social skills and said she suffered from learning difficulties.

Miss Knight claimed there had been no vindictiveness in Cottrell's naming two men in her allegations - she had merely done it to make her story sound true.

She added that when Cottrell made the allegations she was attention-seeking and did not realise the seriousness of what she was doing.