

RESOURCES: Manhunt called off as 'rape' proves hoax

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POLICE called off a large scale manhunt for a rapist after it was discovered the 15-year-old "victim" had made up her story.

POLICE called off a large scale manhunt for a rapist after it was discovered the 15-year-old "victim" had made up her story. Up to 50 officers were brought in, and patrols stepped up around Netherton, Peterborough, after the girl reported that she had been dragged into woods close to the Edith Cavell Hospital, in nearby Bretton, and assaulted as she walked to school.

But the investigation has now been closed, after the girl, who cannot be named for legal reasons, admitted her story was a hoax.

After receiving the call, specialist officers were called in to speak to the "distraught" girl, who even gave them a description of a man.

A wide area surrounding Buckland Close and Atherstone Avenue was cordoned off and carefully examined by scenes of crime officers, looking for evidence that they would never find.

The police helicopter also scoured the area, hoping to catch the culprit, who was believed to still be in the area.

Peterborough was plunged into panic following news of the attack, which came days after the body of murdered prostitute Zelia Harrison was found in Millfield.

The story was reported across the country, on national radio and television news bulletins, as police desperately appealed for information from the public.

A man in his 20s was even arrested on Friday afternoon in connection with the alleged attack.

But he was quickly eliminated from the inquiry and released.

Sarah Cooper, spokesman for Cambridgeshire police, broke the news of the hoax on Saturday evening, less than 36 hours after the girl made her false claims.

She said: "New information came to light and, as a result, the investigation was ended.

Those involved have been spoken to by police officers, and the matter is now closed.

"We would like to take this opportunity to thank the public for their assistance, and reassure them that the matter has been dealt with and there is no need for concern."

Community officer Mike Sampson added: "We take every allegation of this sort very seriously, and will always investigate it thoroughly.

"We look down on any case where the claims, as in this case, are untrue. It is an arrestable offence to lie to police and those involved have been warned about their behaviour and the consequences that wasting police time and resources can have."

Gul Nawaz, city councillor for Ravensthorpe, where it is believed the girl lives with her family, is upset by the news.

He said: "When I first heard about the rape, I was very shocked – everybody was shocked.

"This should never have happened. It is not good what this girl has done.

"The police are busy investigating the murder and, as we all know, we have limited resources. But I am very grateful for the police's hard work."

Several of the police officers on the case were taken away from the murder inquiry.

<https://www.peterboroughtoday.co.uk/news/environment/resources-manhunt-called-off-as-rape-proves-hoax-1-60840>