

# Times & Star

## **CARLISLE POLICE SPENT EQUIVALENT OF SEVEN WEEKS INVESTIGATING FALSE RAPE CLAIMS**

***By Nick Griffiths Crime Reporter***

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**Detectives spent more than 1,150 hours investigating two false rape claims that spread fear in Carlisle and impacted on other investigations.**



DCI Lee Johnson

Officers, including CID investigators, intelligence officers, specialist search officers and community beat police, were drawn into the high-profile cases at huge public expense.

Carlisle's most senior detective said the claims also led to worries there was "a rapist on the loose" and left people in fear of going out.

The total impact of the lies on police resources was revealed this week as the second woman in as many weeks appeared in court to admit she had made it up.

The lies had come within two weeks of one another last autumn and police said there was "a combined impact" that caused hysteria.

Takara Jayne Harding, 18, pretended she had been the victim of a terrifying sex attack in a Carlisle city centre car park.

Chloe Jayne Fox, 20, told police she had been dragged into an alley, raped against railings and forced to perform a sex act on her attacker.

Detective Chief Inspector Lee Johnson said: "Offences of stranger rape are extremely rare in Cumbria.

"These crimes are taken seriously and significant resources are provided to investigate them thoroughly.

"The need to allocate detectives to undertake inquiries on these alleged rapes seriously impacted on other investigations."

The claim by Harding led to a large part of Town Dyke Orchard car park and West Walls being cordoned off.

Harding was also taken to be examined by a specialist doctor and house-to-house inquiries were carried out.

Carlisle Magistrates' Court heard on Monday how Harding lied about being raped after her boyfriend texted her to say they were finished.

He had received texts that she was out "with another man" in the city centre.

Harding, of Low Meadow, Raffles, Carlisle, sent him texts asking for help and claiming she was being followed home, with one message reading: "I'm getting raped".

Just over a week after making up the lie, Harding came clean.

In court, she admitted causing the wasteful employment of police. She was sentenced to 16 weeks in custody, suspended for a year, and given a community order which will include six months of supervision.

Harding, who was also ordered to carry out 100 hours of unpaid work and pay £85 costs, had claimed she was the victim of a rape on October 1.

Fox, of Spencer Street in Carlisle city centre, told a friend she had been attacked and even rang her mother to claim she had been raped.

But 20 days later she withdrew the allegation and admitted she had made it up. The attack was alleged to have happened as she walked past Barton's Place, off Warwick Road, on September 19.

Fox admitted causing wasteful employment of police time and was sentenced to four months in prison, suspended for 12 months, ordered to complete 180 hours unpaid work and to pay £85 costs.

DCI Johnson added: "We do not want these cases to deter genuine victims of sexual assault from coming forward.

"We do everything possible to protect and support victims and we will thoroughly investigate any reports of sexual assault we receive."

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