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# Ulster Herald

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Woman made false rape claim to get 'free lift home with police'



A YOUNG woman falsely claimed she was raped in the Castlederg area in order to get a lift home with police, a court heard.

Judge Melody McReynolds told Dungannon Crown Court on Tuesday that Emma Louise Gallagher, Ardnalee Park, Strabane, had made a “gratuitous and lightly made allegation to secure a free police lift home”.

The 23-year-old had made a false report to police on September 16 2013 that she had been raped by a male who had been in her company earlier on the date in question. She had made the report shortly after coming into a house in the Castlederg area, a place she was not familiar with.

A man, whose identity can't be revealed for legal reasons, was subsequently questioned for four hours by police.

The defendant pleaded guilty to the charge of perverting the course of justice and was given a nine months jail sentence suspended for two years.

The court heard the victim declined to give a victim impact statement, as he wanted to move on with his life.

Prosecuting Counsel Suzanne Gallagher told the court that the defendant gave police a definite description of her alleged attacker and that he was wearing a white striped t-shirt.

Gallagher originally told police that she had fallen in an alleyway and a man had pulled her trousers down and she thought he had raped her on two occasions. But she said the more she thought about it, she did not think anything had happened and the complaint was withdrawn.

The court heard the defendant was in an intoxicated state at the time of making the allegations and had no previous convictions.

Defence counsel Mr McStay said there were “exceptional circumstances” in this case. He said his client had alcohol issues, suffered from depression and was a carer for her mother who had a high dependency.

But he said Gallagher was now dealing with her mental health and alcohol issues and was engaging with the relevant services.

## ‘DRUNKEN DESIRE TO GET LIFT HOME’

He told the court she had learned a salutary lesson from an incident that was born out of a drunken desire to get a lift home.

The counsel agreed the allegations were “corrosive” but asked for a suspended sentence in the circumstances.

He added that his client was now engaging positively with various groups in Strabane. Judge Melody McReynolds said the defendant’s allegations were indeed “corrosive” of the credibility of truthful complainants.

And she said it was also disillusioning for those professionals who worked diligently in this area.

The judge said the defendant had been in a drunk and dishevelled state when she made the complaint.

She acknowledged Gallagher had been out in Castlederg, an area that was she was not familiar with.

Judge McReynolds said the defendant had repeated her claims of rape the following day before retracting her claim.

Judge McReynolds noted that a psychiatrist had said the defendant was in an alcohol-induced blackout at that period.

The judge also noted the defendant had sustained a head injury, when she was attacked by an ex-boyfriend in Strabane on August 4 shortly before the incident before the court.

The judge also noted the defendant was at medium risk of re-offending. She added the defendant had also shown some remorse and was dealing with mental health issues.

Judge McReynolds said Gallagher's health issues were exceptional enough to justify a suspended jail sentence.

The judge gave the defendant a nine months jail sentence suspended for two years. The judge warned if there was any re-offending the court would impose a nine months consecutive sentence.

<http://ulsterherald.com/2015/04/18/woman-made-false-rape-claim-to-get-free-lift-home-with-police/>