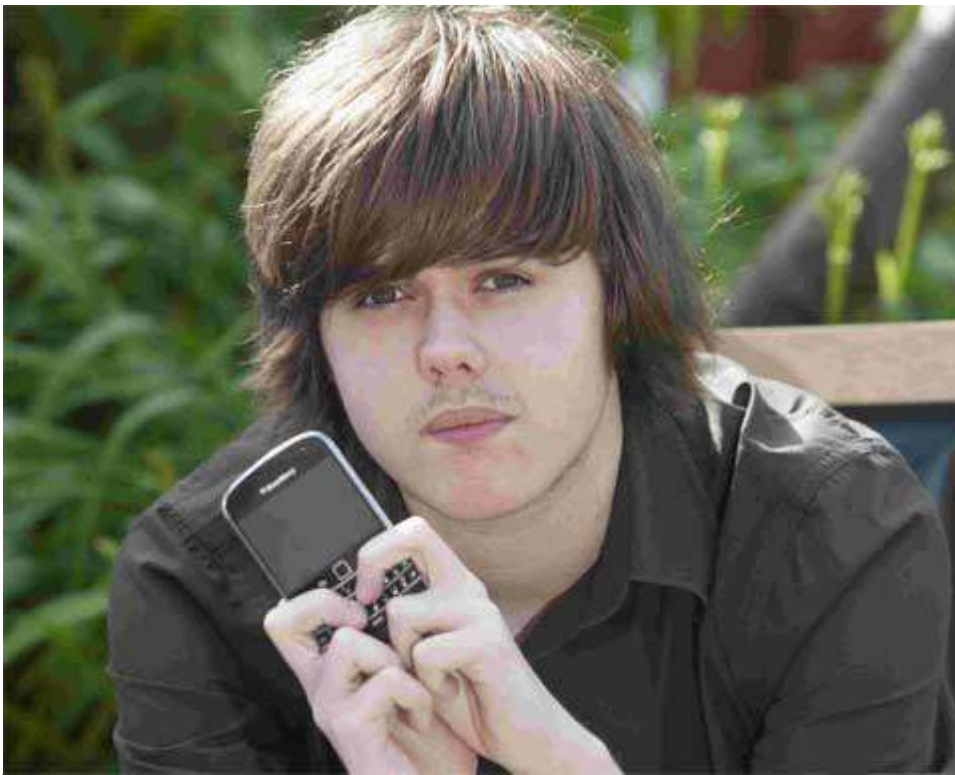


My Facebook 'rapist' ordeal: teen's hell after online sex attack allegation

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By Stephen Bailey



TERRIFIED : Zach Freestone, 15

A MUM is warning about the dangers of social media after her son was bullied over a malicious rape rumour.

Debbie Freestone wants teenagers to understand the harm they can do after 15-year-old son Zach was left afraid to go outside.

Zach, a Portchester School pupil from Bournemouth, told the Echo: "It's crushed me emotionally. I feel scared to leave the house in case I get my head kicked in because of that rumour."

The story was spread online by someone known to the family. Strangers contacted Zach through Facebook and Blackberry Messenger to abuse him or to ask if it was true.

Mum Debbie said the girl who was supposedly the rape victim came round Zac's house to apologise and say the rumours had nothing to do with her.

A Dorset Police spokesman told the Echo that it was a "malicious rumour spread by social networking sites".

The spokesman added: "Although this is a civil matter, police officers have liaised with all the parties concerned and provided words of advice. The pupils' schools have also been notified."

Mum Debbie, 52, a housekeeper from Pokesdown, said her solicitors were writing to both a boy and a girl demanding a written apology and no repetition of the allegation.

Debbie said: "The police have been very good. They went to see the boy and said he has got to remove the Blackberry message.

"Parents need to know how vulnerable children are online and we want to publically clear Zac's name.

"This rumour could damage his future – he doesn't drink or smoke and he has kept on a good path.

"To be 15 and to be scared to go outside is not a joke. It's been nightmare for Zac and terrible for me too because I don't want to see my son like that."

Zach showed the Echo one typical Blackberry message from a total stranger in Poole asking if the rumour was true.

He said: "I am up late worrying. I have lost a lot of confidence. I came home feeling alone.

"I just want to get the solicitor's letter out saying stop it because it's ruining my life and I have done nothing wrong."

He added: "I asked the boy why he was spreading it.

"He just said it was because I had told him to shut up."

Zach said he now “hates” Facebook and Blackberry Messenger.

<https://www.bournemouthcho.co.uk/news/9809861.my-facebook-rapist-ordeal-teens-hell-after-online-sex-attack-allegation/>