# Mother criticises school delay in response to alleged pupil sexual assault in Northern Ireland



A secondary school in Northern Ireland has come under scrutiny following an alleged sexual assault involving one of its pupils. The incident, which reportedly took place on May 14, has raised serious concerns from the family of the alleged victim regarding the school's response. The boy's mother has publicly expressed her dissatisfaction, stating that despite contacting the headteacher numerous times, she received no response for four weeks. “Considering how serious this is and the fact that it has been reported to police and social services, I cannot believe that it took so long for the head teacher to speak to me,” she said in an interview. This delay has left her son unsettled and reluctant to return to a school he once loved.

The school, while acknowledging the incident, has refrained from discussing specific details, citing privacy concerns. A spokesperson indicated that the institution would follow its policies and procedures to safeguard students and staff. Similarly, the Education Authority has remarked that it is not inappropriate to discuss individual cases but assured that concerns raised will be addressed in accordance with established protocols. They emphasised that the safety and wellbeing of children is their top priority.

In a broader context, this case emerges against a backdrop of recent initiatives aimed at enhancing the response to sexual offences in Northern Ireland. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has been working to improve its approach to such incidents. In August 2023, the PSNI rolled out a comprehensive training programme for over 500 frontline officers. This training, delivered by Nexus, Northern Ireland’s leading charity for sexual abuse and abusive relationships, aims to improve criminal justice outcomes and the overall experience of victims. Significant recommendations from the Gillen Review, which highlighted the need for reform in the handling of sexual assault cases, underpin these initiatives.

Furthermore, since May 2023, an important safeguarding scheme named Operation Encompass has been in place across all schools in Northern Ireland. This initiative enables police to inform schools about domestic abuse incidents affecting children, allowing for timely support to be established. In the past year alone, the initiative has seen over 3,160 referrals made to designated teachers, exemplifying a proactive approach to safeguarding students.

As these systemic changes take shape, instances like the one reported highlight the ongoing challenges within schools and law enforcement agencies when addressing sensitive cases. The mother of the alleged victim's plea for more prompt and effective communication underscores a critical area for improvement in safeguarding practices. Schools and authorities must navigate these issues delicately, ensuring that both the victims and their families feel supported, while also adhering to protocols that protect the integrity of all parties involved.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/concern-over-handling-alleged-sex-31798842)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/concern-over-handling-alleged-sex-31798842), [[4]](https://www.4ni.co.uk/northern-ireland-news/309076/training-transforms-police-response-to-rape-and-sexual-abuse-crimes)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.psni.police.uk/latest-news/police-roll-out-training-help-transform-response-rape-and-sexual-abuse), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cv228qz999xo), [[5]](https://www.4ni.co.uk/northern-ireland-news/296973/operation-encompass-now-operating-across-all-ni-schools)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/concern-over-handling-alleged-sex-31798842> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.psni.police.uk/latest-news/police-roll-out-training-help-transform-response-rape-and-sexual-abuse> - In August 2023, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) launched a bespoke training package aimed at transforming its response to rape and sexual abuse. Delivered by Nexus, Northern Ireland's leading sexual abuse and abusive relationships charity, the training was completed in June 2024, with over 500 frontline officers trained. The initiative was part of the Gillen Review's recommendations to improve criminal justice outcomes and victim experiences, focusing on raising awareness and challenging internal unconscious biases within the PSNI.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cv228qz999xo> - The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has provided training to more than 500 frontline officers to enhance its response to victims of rape and sexual crimes. Over the past 12 months, Nexus, a sexual abuse and abusive relationships charity, delivered in-person training to officers. The initiative aligns with the Gillen Review's recommendations to improve criminal justice outcomes and the experiences of victims, focusing on raising awareness and challenging internal unconscious biases within the PSNI.
4. <https://www.4ni.co.uk/northern-ireland-news/309076/training-transforms-police-response-to-rape-and-sexual-abuse-crimes> - In June 2024, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) completed a bespoke training initiative designed to transform its response to incidents of rape and sexual abuse. Launched in August 2023, the training was delivered by Nexus, Northern Ireland's leading sexual abuse and abusive relationships charity. The initiative was part of the Gillen Review's recommendations to improve criminal justice outcomes and victim experiences, focusing on raising awareness and challenging internal unconscious biases within the PSNI.
5. <https://www.4ni.co.uk/northern-ireland-news/296973/operation-encompass-now-operating-across-all-ni-schools> - In May 2023, Operation Encompass, a safeguarding scheme designed to support young people affected by domestic violence and abuse, was fully rolled out across all 1,162 schools and Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) centres in Northern Ireland. The scheme enables police officers to inform schools about domestic abuse incidents involving children, allowing for timely support to be put in place. Since its inception, there have been 3,160 referrals made by police to designated teachers.
6. <https://www.4ni.co.uk/northern-ireland-news/295352/more-schools-join-operation-encompass-initiative> - In March 2023, schools across the Northern and Western Trust areas joined the Operation Encompass initiative, which allows police to share information with schools about domestic abuse incidents involving children. This partnership between the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the Safeguarding Board of Northern Ireland (SBNI), the Education Authority (EA), and schools aims to support children who witness domestic violence or abuse in the home. The scheme ensures that relevant information is passed to the child's school before 9am the following morning, enabling appropriate support to be provided.
7. <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/de-action-plan-tackling-child-sexual-exploitation-northern-ireland> - The Department of Education in Northern Ireland has outlined its response to the recommendations for education arising from the report of the independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation. The action plan focuses on tackling child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland, detailing the steps the department is taking to address the issue and improve safeguarding measures within educational settings.