

PRESS RELEASE

6 February 2023

Police force settle civil claim with vulnerable victim following allegations of rape and coercive control made against serving Inspector

A woman, S, has settled a civil claim against a police force in respect of rape and coercive control involving an Inspector and the subsequent failure of the police force to adequately investigate her complaints.

S, whose identity is protected by an anonymity order, is a vulnerable repeat victim of crime. She has suffered child sexual abuse and domestic abuse at the hands of successive partners. She suffers from a number of enduring mental health conditions.

S's claim was that in late 2013 an Inspector (Officer X) contacted her via Facebook indicating that he knew about the circumstances of a bereavement she had suffered. A relationship developed between them which S alleged was controlling and coercive, and that Officer X took advantage of her clear vulnerability to pursue a relationship with her, including meeting her while on duty and in uniform.

S stated that a few months later, she was approached by two other officers who were friends with Officer X. She had sex with one of the officers and the other officer sent her an unsolicited picture of his penis. S believes that these three officers were using Facebook to groom vulnerable women like her for sexual relationships.

S advanced a case that in June 2014 she was raped by Officer X, while he was on duty and that his coercive and controlling behaviour continued thereafter, including that Officer X unlawfully accessed information about a new partner of hers using the Police National Computer (PNC).

In August 2014 the police force opened a gross misconduct investigation into Officer X's unlawful access of the PNC and his Facebook activity. At this point S did not disclose to the force the sexual nature of their relationship and nor did Officer X. In November 2014 Officer X was found to have a case to answer for misconduct and preparations began for a misconduct meeting.

Around this time S suffered a serious mental health crisis and during a police attendance, she disclosed that she had been in a sexual relationship with Officer X and that he had raped her. A gross misconduct investigation was launched and the matter referred to the CPS for a charging decision. However, Officer X was not suspended from duties. In April 2016 the CPS confirmed that Officer X would not be charged with any offence; but in December 2016 Officer X was found to have a case to answer for gross misconduct. He was still not suspended from duties, although S understands that he had another outstanding complaint in connection with another woman with whom he had a personal relationship.

In March 2017 shortly prior to the gross misconduct hearing, the force determined that Officer X had no case to answer for gross misconduct and that Officer X should only face 'management action' for misconduct, solely in relation to failing to disclose his

relationship with S and not in relation to any sexual misconduct. This brought the misconduct proceedings to an end and, in S's view, denied her the justice that she had been seeking.

S instructed Bhatt Murphy solicitors in March 2018. The force has now agreed to pay S substantial damages in response to her civil claim. However, no admissions have been made and the force has declined to offer S an apology. As of October 2022 Officer X was understood to be a serving officer, and he may still be serving today.

S gave the following statement:

"I was abused by a serving Inspector in 2014 and I have spent the best part of a decade trying to hold him to account. I believe that I was targeted by this officer and his friends as I was a vulnerable woman with a traumatic past, information that would have been available to him. Despite there being at least one other complaint concerning a woman with whom he had some sort of a relationship, he continued to serve within the force even after he was found to have a case to answer for gross misconduct. The lack of an admission of liability or an apology is extremely disappointing but nevertheless this settlement serves as some accountability for my treatment and will hopefully allow me to move on with my life. I have decided to go public about my experiences in the hope that it will encourage other victims to come forward about abuse by police officers."

Sophie Naftalin, solicitor for S said:

"S's case is yet another example of a high ranking police officer abusing his position for sexual purposes. The settlement reflects the seriousness of the issues at stake and comes at a time where police forces are under intense scrutiny following the revelations around David Carrick in the Metropolitan Police Service and the failure to dismiss officers who perpetrate abuse and use their power to avoid accountability. We have had no confirmation that this Inspector is no longer serving with access to other vulnerable victims and highly sensitive material as contained on police systems. How can women trust the police to keep them safe if forces are unwilling to remove officers who abuse their power from their ranks?"

NOTES TO EDITORS

- In March 2020 the Centre for Women's Justice submitted a super complaint alleging that forces were failing to respond adequately to allegations of police perpetrated domestic abuse. The super-complaint can be found [here](#)
- The 2022 responses to the super-complaint including the joint investigation by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, the College of Policing and the IOPC can be found [here](#) and the CWJ's briefing on the response can be found [here](#)
- On 17 October 2022 Baroness Casey's interim report into the misconduct system within in the Metropolitan Police Service identified systemic failings particularly in relation to allegations relating to sexual misconduct. Her letter to Commissioner Mark Rowley can be found [here](#)

Bhatt Murphy Solicitors

For further information or request for comment please contact Sophie Naftalin at Bhatt Murphy on 020 7729 1115 or s.naftalin@bhattmurphy.co.uk

S is represented by Sophie Naftalin of Bhatt Murphy and Una Morris of Garden Court Chambers.