



Language used by Prosecutors

Monday 5th August. Neil Wilson appears at Snaresbrook Crown Court charged with 2 counts of making extreme pornography & 1 count of sexual activity with a child. Wilson pleaded guilty to all of the offences put before him.

The prosecutor described the 13 year old as "predatory in all her actions, and she is sexually experienced." In summing up, the judge responded "I have taken into account that the even though the girl was 13, prosecution say that she looked and behaved a little bit older.....On these facts, the girl was predatory and was egging you on. That is no defence when dealing with children but I am prepared to impose a suspension."

The story was reported by [Court News](#) UK, and we were alerted to it by one of our twitter followers, Lucy Wales.

We read the report, and our first reaction was that there had been a mistake in the court reporting. We know that defence counsel use emotive words to discredit prosecution witnesses and we assumed that in this case, the statement had been made by defence counsel. It was still inappropriate - and had been used in mitigation for the sentence. We planned to appeal to the Attorney General for a sentence review and thought that would be as much as we could do.

During the first few of hours of the story breaking, lots of twitter followers contacted us about it, so we started to fact check. Thanks to Kevin Rawlinson, we confirmed that the statement **was** made by prosecution and it seemed that the judge had accepted this statement **and** used it in mitigation when sentencing, resulting in Neil Wilson being sentenced to 12 months imprisonment, suspended for 2 years. This meant he walked free from court, with a supervision order imposed on him.

We were astounded that this comment could have come from a prosecutor. We knew we had to take further action.

We contacted John Coventry from Change.Org, who helped us set up a petition. We needed a tangible aim; an outcome that we could measure & we needed to capture the public fury about this case.

We set the [petition](#) up on Tuesday 6th August - it didn't go 'live' at 9am as they usually would, because making certain that it was a prosecution statement was a necessary precaution. Starting a petition only to find that it was a defence statement would have made us & Change.Org look particularly foolish.

11am came, and the petition was live. Within a couple of hours we had 500 signatures! Our twitter followers were great. We had great support from Caroline Criado-Perez, who generated us lots of support. We saw blogs written about it, it was shared on Facebook - social media activism was being shown at its best.



We emailed all of our contacts with the petition and by the end of Tuesday afternoon, we were approaching 3,000 signatures.

SkyNews contacted us to ask for a quote - and decided that they'd prefer a face to face interview. One of our founders opted to remove her anonymity in order to be interviewed by SkyNews. This was a significant decision to make - as a survivor of sexual violence, she is (was!) entitled to lifelong anonymity, and removing that is a big step. In this case, it was deemed necessary in order to add a more personal perspective to this case.

SkyNews requested an interview on Sunrise with Eamon Holmes, the following morning. It was all hands on deck to get that petition to 5,000 signatures before the interview!

We wanted to bring with us a groundswell of public opinion. We knew that people could complain about the sentence to the AG, but we wanted them to have a space to express their fury and know that their voices were being heard. We wanted to be able to demand action and the petition gave them an outlet.

Adele Robinson from Sky arrived at Jo's home the next morning, and we'd reached the 5,000 signatures target that we'd set ourselves!

Jo spoke with Eamon live on air about our concerns with the language the prosecutor had used in court, and how this had impacted her personally.

Following the interview, the signatures flooded in. We had thousands upon thousands of people talking about this on social media, it was covered by the [Independent](#) with full credit for our activism.

On the Wednesday afternoon, the CPS announced it is considering the involvement of the barrister in question, Robert Colover, in future sexual cases and that it "will not instruct him in any ongoing or future cases involving sexual offences in the meantime".

Other mainstream media had started to pick up on this issue - with all of them, apart from the Indy, [erasing our activism](#). David Cameron spoke to the national news providers, insinuating that **he** had initiated the CPS investigation. Numerous media outlets covered the story. Reviewing them, it was almost as if the CPS had spontaneously decided to review the case....

On Thursday 8th August, we were front page news. The piece, written by Kevin Rawlinson detailed how our petition had resulted in action from the CPS. The signatures were still pouring in - on Thursday evening, we'd had 50,000 sign to say they agreed with us!

We started the petition on Tuesday 6th August. By Thursday 7th August - we'd WON! The CPS had agreed to the aims of the petition. We received a [letter from the DPP](#); Keir Starmer launched an internal investigation into this case & agreed that language such as 'predatory' is of concern, and inappropriate.

On Friday 9th August, we contacted all our supporters to say thank you - we couldn't have done



it without such a high level of support. YOU made the CPS listen, and take note. All 56,007 of you made this happen!

We're currently awaiting the outcome of the internal investigation. We're planning on discussing the use of language in court in more detail once the outcomes have been reported by the CPS.

What do you think the next steps should be? What do you think the CPS should do about these cases? We're expecting them to announce that it was a 'one off', but we'll be surprised if this is the case. After all, Eleanor Laws QC (prosecutor) used the term '[celebrity witch hunt](#)' in the Michael Le Vell trial.

Prosecutors are in place in order to obtain justice for the Crown. Using language that describes a complainant as complicit, to blame or partially responsible for their abuse helps the defence do their job. We don't think that is fair.

Do you?

Tell us what you think - how should the CPS respond? What actions should they take? How can we ensure this isn't happening all over the UK, without us knowing?

Comments are welcome below.