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HSE has failed my daughter after rape, says mum:

By Jennifer Hough

THE mother of a 10-year-old girl who was allegedly raped over a one-year period has claimed the HSE failed to properly handle her daughter's case.

The girl, who is now 14, claims she was raped by a neighbour.

Her mother maintains delays and mistakes made by the HSE during the investigation may have prevented the DPP from prosecuting and has called for an urgent review of the case.

She is currently preparing to write to the DPP outlining the serious psychological effect the lack of prosecution is having on her daughter.

The girl disclosed the abuse to her mother in December 2006 and it was reported to gardaí. By mid-January, her mother claims she still had not heard from the HSE, or been appointed a social worker or a psychologist, even though her daughter was talking about suicide.

The case will centre on the lack of a medical examination and the absence of services to respond to the alleged abuse.

Child protection guidelines state it is "essential that the activities" of the HSE and Garda are agreed and co-ordinated, and that the HSE has overall responsibility for the assessment and management of child protection concerns.

The girl, who had just turned 11, did not get a medical examination until late April 2007, and her mother believes her case was seriously neglected due to the lack of urgency and services available.

It took 15 months for gardaí to send a file to the DPP in March 2008, and another year and a half for a decision to come back in May 2009.

Following this, Minister for Children Barry Andrews was made aware of the case.

The Child Welfare and Protection Policy Unit in his department wrote to Laverne McGuinness, the national director for Primary Community and Continuing Care (PCCC) unit within the HSE asking it to "investigate as a matter of urgency" and to reply directly to the mother of the girl. To date, she has not received any response.

The HSE said it could not comment, as the case was currently being investigated by the Ombudsman for Children. The HSE did offer the girl a medical in February 2007, but it was with a male doctor.

The woman also expressed serious concern over the lack of communication between HSE and Garda.

"I found there was no communication between the HSE and gardaí. She was interviewed three times by gardaí and then I was told she would have to be re-interviewed by the HSE. I expressed my concern about this as my daughter was not doing well and I felt her interests were not being put first."

Ultimately the girl was never interviewed by the HSE as it was decided the interview could not be carried out if her mother was in the room with her.

"My daughter had been interviewed by gardaí so many times that she did not want to go through it again without me. The HSE refused to allow me to be in the room, so she was never interviewed by them. I had to respect her wishes."

Fine Gael's Alan Shatter has raised the case in the Dáil asking the Health Minister for an inquiry and Labour leader Eamon Gilmore is also looking at the case.

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