

Petitioner submission of 1 March 2024

PE2064/B: Ensure that under 16s charged with rape are treated as adults in the criminal justice system

I am writing this submission with regard to the consequences of perpetrators of sexual assault and the rules on childhood sexual offences.

In researching this I found that the rules for child sexual offences are unacceptable.

I have found that if perpetrators are under 16 years old in Scotland and charged for their crimes, they are automatically referred to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, giving them the opportunity to carry on with these types of behaviours because the victim and the perpetrator are both treated as children.

The consequence of committing rape, which is a criminal offence, isn't a charge with a record of sexual offence. Instead, they are referred to SCRA and can be given behaviour therapy and not a custodial sentence for a crime they have committed. I ask why.

The victims are left with a lifetime of difficulty and trauma. It doesn't just affect the victim, it ripples out into the close family. The ongoing effects of trauma result in ongoing emotional distress and practical difficulties for the victim and their family, changing their lives forever too.

I therefore request the Scottish Government to re-consider this and take on board the statistics of the Children in Scotland reported in sexual offences. Furthermore, I believe these perpetrators need to be charged under 16 so there is a criminal record of them and treated as adults so they do not avoid prosecution.

I ask you to consider changing this law to protect the country's innocent children. They deserve justice. I feel they are entitled to that at least. I want to be a voice for our young people. I have been in contact with the Scottish Government on several occasions since 2020. I have also personally reached out to Dorothy Bain.

I ask you to consider changing this law so we can protect the children of the future.

In my research, I was shocked to see how many victims there are.

This is about every child's human rights and to hear their voices. Behind every number is a young survivor.

Every child matters.