



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**DPP DECISION NOT TO PROSECUTE ‘ANY’ OF THE LATEST 25 CASES IN RELATION TO FORMER CONVICTED SEXUAL ABUSE MICHAEL SHINE CALL FOR IMMEDIATE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMISSION OF INVESTIGATION**

A recent decision by the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) not to prosecute the 25 cases of sexual abuse sent to them by An Garda Síochána has left survivors of childhood sexual abuse at the hands of former surgeon Michael Shine in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, devastated.

The majority of victim-survivors that engage with Dignity4Patients services were abused as children between 1964 to 1996 in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. It took many victim-survivors until adulthood to fully understand what happened to them. The sexual abuse they were subjected to as children, in a hospital, or in a doctor’s private rooms, was in fact a crime. A crime then and a crime now.

Due to their childhood trauma and failures of the legal and reporting systems it has taken decades for victim-survivors to engage with our services and to enter any criminal or civil justice proceedings. Others have just come forward and are only at the beginning of ‘any’ justice journey.

Adrienne Reilly CEO states “Dignity4Patients is deeply concerned about the decision by the Director of Public Prosecutions not to prosecute 25 cases of sexual abuse.” 16 of these victim-survivors are supported by Dignity4 Patients. This decision was based on the cumulative factors of delay, cognitive and physical health of the accused, age and historical nature of allegations taken together with a decision from the Court of Appeal form last year.

Adrienne says, “In law, age, health and time past are no barrier to preventing prosecution in cases like this. This decision by the Director of Public Prosecution to rely heavily on the Court of Appeal Judgement, which was about a totally different issue on ‘delay’ leaves all sexual abuse victims of Michael Shine, and others, vulnerable to never seeing justice being served. This kind of interpretation is simply unacceptable.”

Compounding this the lack of trauma informed staff in An Garda Síochána and under sourcing of both the Gardai and the Director of Public Prosecution has led to wholly unsuitable or delayed communication to victim-survivors.

Adrienne describes how “one victim said the unexpected call from the Gardai informing him of the DPP decision as “very strange”...receiving the call during work with no support and no follow on support offered from them, he immediately had to stop work and lie down and was only able to go home when he had recovered... he stated it was not normal for him to have those kinds of episodes, and it was difficult to go back to work each day after that.”

Adrienne continues, “every victim who comes forward to report sexual abuse is entitled to be listened to and dealt with sensitivity and with dignity.” Another victim said “being notified by the Gardai, that their case would not be prosecuted by the DPP was conveyed in a such a manner that he felt like the Guard was simply cancelling a dinner reservation, and had little understanding of the impact this decision had on him’.

Adrienne says that “Even though we have spoken to the Gardai and know that none of this was intentional, it should not happen like that, it is not victim-centered at all. They were very honest and told me they simply don’t have the resources to inform people the way they would like to and are not trauma trained.’

In light of the DPP decision, delays in civil cases for decades, and now seemingly hopes of any prosecutions proceeding being dashed, Dignity4Patients, on behalf of all victims and survivors, is calling on the government and the Minister for Health and Minister for Justice, to immediately establish a Commission of Investigation into sexual abuse of patients in the Irish health service. This Inquiry should include claims of abuse stretching back over decades and inadequate safeguarding by institutions and organisations responsible for patient welfare and safety.

Adrienne states that ‘All the previous arguments about any Commission of Investigation not being able to go ahead because it may prejudice ongoing civil or criminal investigations were dealt with in 2018 by Justice Barry Hickson in order to commence the work of the Commission of Investigation (Response to complaints or allegations of child sexual abuse made against Bill Kenneally and related matters) in relation to the former National Basketball Coach who sexually abuse boys in the 1980’s.”

Victim-survivors are at a loss as to why there still has been no Commission of Investigation into the most prolific sexual abuse offender in this history of the state, where hundreds of children were sexually abuse by one person.

Many victims-survivors have stated that if the government and the Department of Justice are serious about ‘zero-tolerance’ to all forms of violence including sexual violence, then the same standard of justice should be applied to yesterday’s children, as to today’s children in the hope that the zero-tolerance approach means there will be no tomorrows children subjected to sexual violations and abuse. That is their ask.

Dignity4Patients continues to work in a victim-centred, confidential manner supporting victims of sexual abuse in health care settings.

If you, a friend, colleague or family member need support at this time, please contact us on:

**Helpline Support:** 041 9843730 Monday – Thursday 10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

**Text Support:** 086 1654111 Monday –Thursday 10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

**Email:** [support@dignity4patients.org](mailto:support@dignity4patients.org)

**Website:** [www.dignity4patients.org](http://www.dignity4patients.org)

**Twitter:** @Dignity4patient

#### Reference Documents

**Mr Justice Barry Hickson announces the formal commencement of the work of the Hickson Commission of Investigation** <https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR18000345>

**Government publishes Zero Tolerance strategy to tackle domestic, sexual and gender-based violence**

<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/5b6b5-government-publishes-zero-tolerance-strategy-to-tackle-domestic-sexual-and-gender-based->

[violence/#:~:text=The%20government%20has%20today%20published,the%20attitudes%20which%20underpin%20it](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/5b6b5-government-publishes-zero-tolerance-strategy-to-tackle-domestic-sexual-and-gender-based-violence/#:~:text=The%20government%20has%20today%20published,the%20attitudes%20which%20underpin%20it)