



## PPS PRESS STATEMENT, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Marianne O’Kane, PPS Assistant Director and Head of the PPS’s Serious Crime Unit which handles serious cases including all sexual offences, said today:

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the dedicated service of the jury over the last nine weeks.

I thank them for their conscientious consideration of the evidence and we respect the verdict that they have reached.

The evidence received in this case was subjected to a very thorough and careful examination by a team of experienced lawyers including Senior Counsel, before we concluded that the Test for Prosecution was met, in line with our Code for Prosecutors.

This meant that there was both sufficient evidence to provide a **reasonable prospect** of conviction and it was in the public interest to prosecute.

This case was properly brought before the Courts and overcame a number of legal challenges. It was ultimately right that the matter was placed before a jury to make their determination.

I extend our appreciation to Her Honour Judge Patricia Smyth, to the many prosecution witnesses and to the prosecution team, led by Toby Hedworth QC, who have all approached this case with great care.

I also want to recognise the commitment of Senior Public Prosecutor Keith Harbinson, who has had conduct of this case from June 2016, when Officers in the PSNI first made contact seeking prosecutorial advice.

And I would like to pay tribute to the work of the PSNI in this complex case. We are grateful for the strong working partnership with an expert and professional investigation team.

Most importantly, I want to take a moment to recognise the courage and determination of the complainant and her family throughout these proceedings.

There has been extensive media coverage of this case, sometimes at a level which has been unprecedented in recent times. I hope that this has helped the public to better understand the criminal justice system and the trial process. I also hope that there will be a continuing conversation about societal attitudes in relation to sexual offences.

Rape and other sexual assaults are devastating crimes and from our close, daily contact with women and men who have been victims of sexual violence, we understand the impact upon them and their families.

We work very closely with both police and victims' organisations such as Nexus and Victim Support to make sure that victims will have all the support they need throughout the criminal justice process.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to say to anyone who has been a victim of any offence, please come forward and be assured that you will be treated with sensitivity and respect throughout.

Thank you.

## **Notes to editors**

- For further information please contact PPS Communications on 028 90897187 or the out of hours press officer on 07990 031568. Email: [ppspressoffice@ppsni.gov.uk](mailto:ppspressoffice@ppsni.gov.uk)