Battling for justice for the rape of your child

A single mother talks to Security Correspondent Cormac O'Keeffe



about the 'unspeakable' abuse her child suffered, the 'justice' achieved in the sentence, and the 'epidemic' of child sexual abuse in Ireland

ANE* has few photographs up in her home
anymore. There was a
full of them. But, now, they would
be a constant reminder of the
"before and after."
The "before" was the normal,
happy, innocent world of
children, smiling and messing; a
time of good memories and a lifetime after of the desired of more
and into her life and the sickening violence he inflicted on her
son and the inescapable trauma
he left behind.
"The abuse of my son began

he left behind.
"The abuse of my son began
very young," Jane said, speakin
from her home in Leinster. "I
know this because I love taking
photos; there's no photos now.
That's because the before and
after tells an awful story,
"Tictures [from before] show

after tells an awful story.

"Pictures from before) show him laughing or running through which are to the control of the contr

Vulnerable

Vulnerable
Jane, a single-mother, said she was vulnerable when she met the perpetrator. She and her three children were leaving a controlling situation in a religious community and during this process, which that light, is gone

and during this process, which was in 2011, she had started going to a local sports club.

There, she met a coach and started training. "At the beginning he was very professional, very sport-oriented. It was all about the training," she said.

It was all about the training. See said.

"He had coached me for a couple of months before he made any advances on me and I'll never forget the time when he did make that advance. He had said to the head coach at the time about giving me extra lessons and he got permission.

So I turned up and he was re and he was coaching me So I turned up and ne was there and he was coaching me and in the middle of a session he and in the middle of a session he correst bend and it kin with cook me by surprise because it was the opposite to what I was supposed to be there for." She said that, slowly, they became close. Soon after, she brought her children to the sports club. "At the beginning it was only me, but then I brought my children and he started to coach them as well." It strated the coach them as well." It strated him.

'I trusted him'

Trusted bim'

Initially, he was "very kind" to all of them. "He was all about the kids," she said. "He couldn't do enough for them. And what got me at the time was the had a nactual sports car, and he changed that sports car, and he changed that sports car, and he changed the sp

OK. And I suppose I'm the mother, aren't I? It shouldn't

mother, aren't PI tshouldn't have happened."
She said she now knows how it happened: "I trusted him. I was vulnerable. I was looking for help. I was replacing a religion with somebody that, to me, preented an opportunity to give me and my kids a normal family life. That's what I only ever wanted."
The man told her she had talious the work of the mental told her she had talious the with the state he needed to train the state of the mental told her she needed to the state of the stat

The man told her she had talent, but that she needed to train hard. While she trained, he often babysat, typically at weekends and school holidays.

deadness in the eyes. You can see

it in his eyes. It's

dead. That life,

Dark turn
Things took a darker turn when her now partner suggested moving into a new home, outside the town, deeper in the countryside.
At the time, Jane felt it was a great idea? "We were in our first thought it would be a great idea if we moved from a housing estate into the country."
"It was a fabulous house. I came from the country. So the

"It was a fabulous house. I came from the country. So the country life is what I would appreciate. And (Me talked about) it's easier to rear children in the country, all the influences from the town life, it's much better'. "So I went along with it, I was quite happy to go along with it. If left it was a benefit. And of course I was more isolated."

And with this.

not right. That's not normal.
That's wrong.
Last month on the day of the victim impact statements—one for the control of the c

sometimes plied the boy with alcohol.

A local garda told the court
that the man carried out the
rapes in a total of 11 different locations, including the family
home, vehicles, and a boat.
In his victim impact statement,
Jane's son said that before the
abuse started he had a lot of
friends in primary school, but
that after it started he found it difficult to take part in school activthat after it started with the control of the
and struggled with rage and
shame.

Jane said her son was "very dis-turbed" throughout secondary school.

to the control of the

Mental toll

I was more isolated. And with this, the rape and vicontrol took at option intensified.

Districtives anymore, while uncertainties about

Here son was 16 when he eventually summoned up the courage to disclose to his mum. "My poor son, you didn't ask. "My poor son, you didn't ask to be given an education and be given opportunities in life. "The very individual that was part of that whole process took all the policy of the policy." They device the policy of the policy. They device the policy of the policy. They decided to go to the policy. Jane said. "He was very kind and very professional and he cared for the distribution the policy of the policy of the policy of the policy. The policy of the tainties about her partner did stray into her mind occasion mind occasion-ally, Jane said she did not trust these thoughts: "The thing when you're vulnerable, you do not trust yourself. When you're a vulneryou're trying your best to be what your children need, and you're just

Disclosure

cnildren need, and you're just hard. And you get these feelings hard. And you get these feelings way! would feel about people. I'm a people's person. I like people.—I would never in my wildest dreams have believed that somebody could have been capable of behaving like this. "In ad feelings and I said: 'Jane, and the said would have been capable of behaving like this. That some the said: 'Jane, and the said would be a said would be a said would be a said.' That's more if the said would be a said would be a

"There is abuse in this house, she said, speaking to the Irish Examiner in the sittling room of the rented home. "He raped my son here."

She said her son's behaviour deteriorated. She walked up the said anding.

"He was extremely angry, he damacod and muscod."

"He was extremely angry, he damaged and punched walls and doors in our home," she said, pointing to the door of the hot press, which has cracks and holes on both sides of the door.

has cracks and holes on both sides of the door.

Jane said that her son's mental health suffered terribly and that one day she came home to find him about to take his own life. 'I was going to hang himself, because he couldn't cope with life.' She said her son had so much going for him and that he had even managed to compete at national level in his sport. But even that too was robbed from him. 'He just couldn't train and he she was hyperventilating.' she said. 'It was just having people so near him.'

them. They did their job but they were also able to mind us and care for us."

After the disclosures, forensic examinations were carried out: "Tests for Aids had to be done, that was very frightening. They stared their is not normal."

Five years ago, she said they started their therapeutic journey with St Louise's Unit at Crumlin Hospital (now The Alders Unit based at Tallaght Hospital), which specialises in helping child victims of sexual abuse as well as "The therapeutic journey with St Louise's Unit at Crumlin based at Tallaght Hospital), which specialises in helping child victims of sexual abuse as well as "The therapeutic journey with St Louise's Unit at Crumlin Based at Tallaght Hospital), which specialises in helping child victims of sexual abuse as well as "The therapists there do such a fantastic job in supporting families going through these horrendous experiences and traumas," Jane said. "And my son would have had his therapist, who has gone beyond the beyond for bins aid this unit provided a "constant, consistent therapist from day one to the current day" which she said it is so important.

Bias against victims

which she said is so important.

Bias against victims
With the help of therapists and the gardai, her son was eventually able to detail the abuse.

Escala offences over the many vents, "she said." He raped my child and made him perform sexual acts. He made my child do all sorts of things. But my son was brute enough to get the work of the said. The said was the work of the said was brute enough to get justice."

However, the legal system ac-

My son was brave enough to get justice."
However, the legal system, according to Jame, did not make it cording to Jame, did not make it "You are trying to deal with trauma, and you are then having to step into an area that you're so unfamiliar with, all the legal issues," she said. "It is extremely reliant on people to tell you things. And the problem is that I had nowhere to go. I didn't know who to ask. And that again layered another area of stress and trauma, lying awake at night space that you're so alien to, that you have no answers." At the

same time, she said, "your child is struggling and suffering and you, as a parent, can barely func-tion."

as strugging and suffering and you, as a parent, can barely function, as the property of the p

She was also told that she should not discuss the abuse with her son as it could be seen as "coaching" a witness. Throughout her experience, the biggest issue she said was the difference in how victims are treated compared to the accused, or if they plead guilty, the perpetrator.

"In the legal system, regardless for whatever reason, the perpetrator becomes very, very pro-tected at the expense of the vic-tim," she said.

trator becomes very, very protected at the expense of the victim, "she said."

Therapy notes

One area that hit her and her son deeply was the right of the defence to see his therapy notes.

Jame said. "If go to a therapist that possibly nobody in my life ever heard and I've barely even spoken to myself about, but I feel it skilling me inside and I need to do something, and I disclose the state of the said of t

rested and question... 2021. He was subsequently charged on a total of 87 counts.

All was subsequently charged on a total of 87 counts.

Last November, as the trial approached at the Central Criminal Court, he entered a guilty plea to 27 sample charges of rape and sexual assault between 2015 and sexual assault between 2015 and the ween 10 and 14 to "They told us that he was going to jail, that he's giving a guilty plea," Jane said. "We were told there and then that if you accept that he's going to jail, My son the sexual properties of the sexual that the

nise care for his elderly mother "My son was very upset," Jan-said. "He had pleaded guilty but he was allowed to walk free for

1 don't know happiness anymore. It's all just anger. It's like a cancer which has grown roots right through me. I can't cry anymore. I shout and a noise comes out of my mouth that I don't recognise.

See was allowed to walk free for three months after we were told he was going straight to jail. That really, really upset my son because we were colebrating. That was more trauma."

She said his therapist came to his aid: "She finished work in Tallaght and made her way to his home! that evening, in the dark of her was going to be okay. She ensured she gave him time to tak, to process things. And when I knew that, he was going to be okay. She did that."

Victim statements
On February 12, he and his mother were set to give their victim impact statements and counsel to give their closing state-

tim impact statements and coursel to give their closing statements.

The defendant, aged 51, sat impassively throughout, showing little reaction to the heart-break-little reaction to the course of the cour

that his heart is still beating," he said. "My childhood and my youth was taken away from me. This is a life sentence for me." of the said is counsel John Shortt said his client wanted to express his remorse, saying "it's too late now." He visibly baulked and shook his head when M' shoutt said his velop an understanding and engagement with him. In her statement, Jane said happiness abandoned her family. It's like cancer which has grown it's like cancer which has grown that a psychological report on his client found that there was an "above average risk of re-offending, because of a lack of insight" into his actions and to listen to re-

ing, because of a lack of insight" into his actions.

The teenager had to listen to remarks from the two barristers and the judge about the possible sentences, with Conor Devally, prosecuting, suggesting the middle-to-upper range of the 10-15 year bracket.

Guilty plea

Guilty plea
The victim shook his head when
Ms Justice Biggs, who had earlier
commended his bravery in making his statement, said the guilty
plea and the expression of remorse "will reduce the overall
sentence".

sentence".
The judge remanded the defendant in custody pending sentencing on March 11.
Jane, exhausted and strained, stood up and watched the defendant being taken away, for the first time, by prison officers down to the holding cells and onward to Mountjoy Prison.
"It was very important to me."

Mounting ceits and onward to Mounting Prison.
"It was very important to me that I saw him being taken away."

One of her biggest complaints about the legal system is the impact of a guilty plea and the influence it gives the perpetrator over the final sentence. "When a perpetrator pleads guilty they now have an opportune the prison of t

because they have done wrong. They give a guilty plea and auto-matically they get a reduced sentence. That adds more trauma. She said this was even more so on hearing his psychiatric report saying he was above average risk of reoffending due a lack of imsight into the impact of his rapes. "He's a very dangerous man," Jane said.

"He's a very dangerous man," Jame said.

She said the number one priority of the court is to avoid an appeal. "Everything is about making sure an appeal doesn't happen," she said. "And the issue with that is it's very much at the expense of the victim. So the victim is not seen in this, my son's trauma, my son's pain, the rest of his life lost because of years and years of rape."

Sentencina

When it came to the day for sentencing, on Monday, Jane was anxious beforehand and feared the sentence, if low, would be an additional blow to both herself and her son.

and her son.
Inside the court, her son, again, joined on video-link.
His tormentor sat largely expressionless throughout.
Ms Justice Biggs said the defendant had engaged in "habit und" rape and sexual assault of the boy and that the impact of this abuse was "horrendous".

She said he "maniputation" in the said her and the said

66 We mourn the been carrying a long time.
There is still a par recovery, She satu ne "manipulated and controlled" the boy, firstly, through allure-ments and rements and re-wards, such as buying him a PlayStation, could have had. PlayStation, and, secondly, by threats, tell-ing him that no one would be-lieve him if he told anyone and it would only hurt his own family We will not know what it's like, what it's like to be untouched by

paedophilia

hart this own family. The judge said it was "evident" from the victim impact statement that the boy suffered "emotional torment and years of anguish".

She praised him for being able to write such "profound words". Addressing him directly, she strong human being, What was done to you was unspeakable." She said he had much to offer the world.

She said he had much to offer the world.

The judge said the abuse was aggravated by the fact it was constant over four to five years and "depraved" in nature. She said the abuse happened when the child was at a young age and in a vulnerable period during pubery. In addition, there was a "sig." In addition, there was a "sig. The child was at a "sig. The child was the property of the property of

remorse.
She noted from psychological

She noted from psychological and probation service reports that the defendant had a "very limited insight" into his crimes and was at a "high or well above average" risk of reoffending, but acknowledged his stated willingness to engage in therapy and rehabilitation.

Ten years

Ten years
Ms Justice Biggs said the impact
of the abuse" can't be quantified."
She took the maximum sentence of 15 years for the rape charges
and applied a headline sentence
of 14 and a half years.
She gave the defending a 25%
She gave the defending to 25%
sentence to 10 years and nine
months.
She suspended the final nine
months for two years on strict
beliation, with a seven and a half
year sentence to 10 sentence for sexual assault

offences to run concurrently. The indge directed five years of

offences to run concurrently.
The judge directed five years of post-release superysion.
Dost-release superysion.
Speaking afterwards, Jane said she was "grateful" that the judge applied a sentence at the top end of the range. However, she was trongly believes the laws have strongly believes the laws have strongly believes the laws have strongly believes the laws have a catually conducting the proceedings, to give longer sentences if warranted, without the expectation the appeal courts will cut their sentences. Will cut their sentences will never be enough, but no sentence can ever equate to the harm done to my child, "Jane said.
"I believe the judge did the best she could, given she is bound by legal rules and the constraints of this nature, this depravity, deserves heftier sentences."
She thanked Ms Jude her son. "I found the judge's comments to my son very kind, very reassuring, very motherly, but she kept her professionalism and she was believed. We can put down this heavy load that we have been carrying a life was "There is still "The

Epidemio

Jane said the pain will always be there: "We mourn the loss of the life we

because we externally will never have it. We will not know what it's like to be untouched by paedophilia. We were than the like what it's like to be untouched by paedophilia. We were than the like were l