

Sentence increased for woman convicted of blackmail

A woman who lied about the existence of a child and blackmailed her victim into paying her large sums has had her sentence increased following an intervention by the Solicitor General, The Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.

Chelsea Roberts, aged 26, started to ask the victim for money for a child she said they had conceived together. Unbeknownst to the victim, the child never existed.

Roberts initially requested money for an abortion, then for missed and cancelled abortion appointments. The offender then lied about giving birth and claimed that the baby was sick and required healthcare in order to ask the victim for more money. She then proceeded to seek more money which she claimed was for supporting the adoption process and eventually for a funeral, after the offender told the victim their child had died.

Over a period of about a year the victim transferred around £29,000 to Roberts. This comprised all his savings and required him to take out several loans, incurring serious debt. On the occasions when the victim asked for proof, refused to pay or claimed that he was being blackmailed; Roberts threatened to tell his girlfriend and family of their relationship. She also threatened to accuse the victim of rape.

Roberts was sentenced to four months' imprisonment in the Crown Court at Hull in September this year. Following a referral to the Court of Appeal by the Solicitor General, on 31 October the sentence was found to be unduly lenient and has been increased to a sentence of 2 years' imprisonment, suspended for 2 years.

After the hearing the Solicitor General said:

"Roberts' fictitious and malicious web of lies caused serious emotional and financial harm to the victim. It is therefore right that her sentence be increased to reflect the amount of harm caused."