

Police hope more victims of sex fiend will seek help

By Caroline Lowbridge

POLICE hope more victims of paedophile Patrick Gallagher will have the courage to seek help now he has been jailed for life.

Detective Constable Rhona Keenan, who investigated the case, said that media coverage of the case might trigger a response from other boys who were sexually abused by him.

"They need more support and help," she said.

"It's not going to make any difference to him - he should die in prison, as the judge quite rightly said - but it can make a difference to them, because we can offer them the support they may need."

Former foster carer Gallagher, 60, of Mansfield, was jailed this week after admitting 55 offences involving 16 boys.

DC Keenan and her colleagues traced all of those victims after a complaint from just one - about an offence Gallagher had committed hours after the funeral of his wife in November 2010.

The known abuse goes back to 1998 but DC Keenan said the victims had not reported it previously because they were terrified of Gallagher, and also ashamed.

"The shame that those boys would feel at having to do acts that were totally alien to everything that they were, and the humiliation they would feel if anybody ever found out about these things, would keep any small, vulnerable child quiet for ever," she said.

"They were scared he was



Caged: Patrick Gallagher abused at least 16 boys.

going to hurt them. Many of them had nowhere to run."

Judge Michael Stokes QC, who said he could not remember dealing with a case as serious and grave, commended DC Keenan for her work, together with DC Dave Elms and analyst Keith Robson, who compiled a timeline of the offences.

Nottingham Crown Court heard that some of the abuse happened in the room where Gallagher's wife lay in bed, dying from cancer.

DC Keenan said: "It's just unbelievable. That is...perversion to the extreme, that you could do that to your dying wife.

"She was lying dying on her bed, incapable of even lifting her head to turn around, probably most of the time asleep, and he would put pornography on and then perform sex acts with the children."

Gallagher groomed many of his victims in this way - by putting on pornography, carrying out sexual acts on himself and then performing sexual acts on them.

DC Keenan said: "He would deliberately put pornography on when young vulnerable children, as young as eight years old, were in the room."

Gallagher, who was employed as a manual worker at an engineering company, was de-registered as a foster carer by Notts County Council in January 2007, after an incident in June 2006 involving a pornographic video.

According to county council files, Gallagher had been watching the video and was seen doing so by a young person who was staying with him. In court, however, prosecutor Dawn Pritchard, said it was discovered that a child had "watched pornographic material" at the Gallaghers' address.

Notts Police said they held a meeting with county council children's services staff to determine how best the allegation should be dealt with. It was agreed that the county council should carry out an investigation.

Police said the original incident, and the investigation that followed it, would be examined as part of a Serious Case Review.

Police interviewed all of the children fostered by Gallagher and his wife as part of their investigation.

They also made inquiries at a children's swimming club Gallagher was involved with

about 30-40 years ago but found that records had not been kept by the club.

The court had heard that Gallagher was also involved with a youth group and a jazz band, and police think he could have been involved with children through further activities.

Of his 55 offences, seven are known to have taken place after he was de-registered in January 2007, and the figure could be as high as 16.

DC Keenan said: "Once de-registered, I'm pretty sure that he

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DC Rhona Keenan

was looking for other opportunities to put himself in a position to abuse children, like he did before."

She added: "I do the job I do because I want to make children safe, and that's how I have to focus. If you have to sit through hours and hours of an evil man abusing children to make sure that he can't abuse any more, then that is what I will do.

"You feel a closeness to all of them because you want to help them. Some of those children, I think, will never recover. The abuse to them was so sustained, extensive, for so long, such awful abuse that I think some of them will end up needing psychiatric help."