

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [sentencingcouncil](#)  
**Subject:** Your Reference ain't Relevant.  
**Date:** Tuesday, 11 February 2025 2:05:58 PM

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I am writing to address the sentencing council regarding the operation of 21A(5A) and specifically the use of good character references during legal proceedings concerning victims of child sexual abuse, domestic violence and vulnerable populations overarching.

The 'Your Reference ain't Relevant' campaign outlines the legal and statistical implications of good character references. My letter will not focus upon these as I am not adequately informed specifically on legal jargon and instead I submit this letter from an anecdotal perspective as a victim of childhood sexual assault and as somebody who endured legal and court proceedings in an attempt to make a difference within my own and other victim/survivors lives.

I did not initially press charges against my abuser. I sought victim support services for approximately 12 months until I built the resolve to face him in court. While my case outcome resulted in a guilty verdict, which is uncommon within many childhood sexual assault cases, the use of good character references resulted in punitive consequences for the individual who assaulted me for 6 years from age 11-17. His sentencing resulted in a small fine and a restraining order which was in place for 12 months. Like many abusers, he was good at what he did, often parading as my father in public, doting on me whenever others were present and threatening me with violence and practiced coercion behind closed doors. He arrived at court with two lawyers, fought the recommended restraining order until the end and used social connections within the community to alienate and isolate not only me, but my family also.

His use of good character references was considered within the trial, contributing to a lack of legal consequences and of any possibility of rehabilitation. This lack of consequence means that he was not placed on sexual offenders list, he could continue to coach soccer teams and undoubtedly offend again. He could pass a police check and gain a working with children's or vulnerable people card.

As this is an anecdotal perspective I cannot positively proclaim that the use good character references within my case is the complete cause of the lenient sentencing of my abuser. However, I can assert with confidence that it influenced sentencing, to what degree is in many ways immeasurable. But for that terrified 17 year old girl who was berated in court by defence council, whose own character was examined, pulled apart and constructed under the guise of due process, I write this letter. Help the most vulnerable in our communities, our children, the disabled community, marginalised and poverty affected communities. Do better.

With hope,

[REDACTED]