

**To be attributed to Detective Senior Sergeant Neil Holden, Wellington Child Protection Team:**

Police take complaints of this nature very seriously and the wellbeing of children is a priority throughout any investigation of this kind. Police work closely with Ministry for Vulnerable Children Oranga Tamariki (MVCOT), with an emphasis to keep children safe.

It is important to note that the circumstances of cases like these are often complex and involve young, vulnerable children. These are factors that Police must consider when investigating and deciding whether or not to prosecute. Police must reiterate that these situations involve vulnerable children and this places some restraint on the details we can share.

However, we are able to summarise the information of the two cases you have enquired about, which are alleged to have occurred between peers at a MVCOT home in Upper Hutt.

The first incident was brought to the attention of both agencies on 22 September 2016. Police commenced an investigation into alleged non-consensual sexual activity by a boy under 17 years and a younger girl. It was reported this incident happened about a month earlier.

Police immediately followed up the complaint and worked with MVCOT staff around making the young girl safe. Difficulties arose in being able to conduct a formal interview straight away. This was due to the child running away and being unwilling to speak to Police.

A formal interview of the girl was undertaken on 8 November and the following day she was medically examined. Police have made every attempt to obtain further information that would assist in the investigation, which remains active.

Police can advise they have been investigating another alleged incident at the same MVCOT home. On 8 December 2016 Police were advised by MVCOT staff that a girl has reported an incident of non-consensual sexual activity with a boy at the house.

The file was assigned to the Police Child Protection Team and a medical and scene examination was completed that day. This was followed by a formal interview with the victim in the days after.

This investigation found insufficient evidence to prosecute. Police met with the victim and her current caregivers to explain the outcome of the investigation, which she understood.

Police continue to work with MVCOT and other relevant agencies to ensure the safety of the young people involved. In both incidents, lengthy discussions have been had with MVCOT and the caregivers to ensure the wellbeing of the young people.

As the young people involved in both cases were in MVCOT custody at the time, all questions relating to their placement will need to be directed to them.

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