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## Prosecution of Former St Joseph's Teacher Patrick Sharkey Comes to a Close

Patrick Sharkey, former teacher in St Joseph's Coleraine, has been remanded in custody and is awaiting sentencing after admitting to around 130 charges of historical childhood sexual abuse involving 19 young boys over a period of approximately 25 years.

Sharkey used his position as a teacher, kayak instructor and the organiser of the after school's club to take pupils on trips to Donegal and Dublin, typically to remote locations, where he would subsequently abuse them.

Submissions from the prosecution and defence on sentencing concluded today with many of our clients providing powerful testimony of the impact that the abuse has had on them and their families.

Michael Bacon, victim of Sharkey:

*"Today marks the conclusion of a long and difficult journey for myself and all the victims of Patrick Sharkey. As a victim, I am relieved that the criminal process is finally coming to an end. This has been a lengthy and challenging journey.*

*I welcome the outcome of the case and the fact that he has ultimately and finally admitted his guilt. While he has pleaded guilty, I have seen nothing while in Court to suggest he has any remorse for his actions.*

*I would like to express my gratitude to the Garda team who investigated this matter. They have been dedicated and thorough in advancing the case against him.*

*However, today is also tinged with sadness. Some victims did not live to see this day or to witness justice being done. For some, this is a direct result of the impact of the abuse they have suffered. I hope that their families take some comfort that while justice was delayed, it has finally been done.*

*Significant questions remain. It is difficult to understand how this serial abuser could have been allowed to act for decades without detection or without the authorities acting to stop him. I know, and have heard from other victims, that allegations of abuse were raised in the 1980s but were not acted upon by the school. If the school had acted when first made aware of these allegations, then there would have been considerably fewer victims today.*

*I look forward to the sentencing in June but even at this stage I do not believe that this is an end, but rather, the start of a process of acknowledgement from those charged with ensuring our protection and safety while in St Joseph's."*

**Partners**

Joseph D McVeigh | Gerard McNamara | Niall Murphy  
Paul Pierce | Setanta Marley | Róise Fitzpatrick



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**Solicitors**

Kevin Winters | Michael Clements  
Owen Winters | Aine Rice

Gary Duffy, Associate Solicitor:

*"Our clients have endured an exceptionally long and difficult journey in seeking justice and there is a shared sense of relief that the criminal process is finally reaching its conclusion.*

*The formal admission of guilt represents a significant and important acknowledgment of the harm inflicted over a 25 year period.*

*We wish to place on record our clients' sincere appreciation for the work undertaken by the Garda investigation team in Donegal. Their tenacity has been instrumental in bringing these matters before the courts.*

*While Sharkey has previously been convicted in Northern Ireland, a significant number of further individuals have now come forward and engaged with the criminal process in the South.*

*In light of this, we call upon the Police Service of Northern Ireland to urgently engage with the victims of Sharkey and An Garda Síochána to assess if any further charges can be brought within this jurisdiction. It is imperative that all allegations are fully and rigorously assessed to ensure that no victim is left without recourse to justice.*

*While the conclusion of these proceedings is an important milestone, serious and legitimate questions remain as to how he was allowed to work in a school for over 25 years. Evidence heard during these proceedings highlighted that concerns had been raised as early as the 1980s. It is a matter of grave concern that such warnings did not result in immediate action and a criminal investigation. It is imperative that the wider school failings, including failings by the senior leadership of the school and the inspecting authorities are also fully and properly investigated and that they are held to account."*

[END]

20<sup>th</sup> May 2026