

report abuse to authorities 'nobody would believe her'



Siblings Christopher, Amanda, Jessica and Helen outside the Central Criminal Court last Friday.

Edition', but as she was branded with her issues with alcohol, nobody believed her at the time - which further spiralled her situation. They described their mother as Noel Farrell's victim too.

"She was a loving mother who just didn't get listened to". She died when she was just 54 years of age in 2009. Christopher and his siblings were vehement when they spoke about others who knew of their situation that did not speak up and protect them, "Shame on ye for not acting out" he said.

"A lot of people knew about this going on back in the eighties and not one of them stood up", he affirmed.

"If you were a parent and you acknowledged and knew something was wrong, then you should have been stepping forward and stepping in - and protecting us, that's a basic instinct", he said. "But not one of ye did. Shame on the people that protected him and did nothing about it". The siblings said that the support systems around them failed to look after them, as Jessica said "we lost a lot of trust in some high up people back then".

They described how their childhood experiences affected their lives growing up. One daughter said that this translated to trust issues, relationship issues, and "not understanding if your own children can understand love, because you don't understand that emotion, as it's not something that you're familiar with".

She said, "as an adult, you have to learn to deal with your emotions, ones that you have suppressed because you have never understood them". "It's like everything hits you at once - you're trying to juggle your mental health and everything that you did go through, and not even believing that it's real".

They spoke about the court process and how the family have attended several court hearings in the Central Criminal Courts in Dublin. They described it as "badly organised" and "chaotic".

One daughter said that she ended up on the same train, in the same carriage as Noel Farrell when going up to Dublin for a court proceeding. They said that this did change whenever

Farrell changed his plea to guilty, but that was only in November of last year.

Christopher said that Noel was "stubborn". "He believed that he could get away with it because it was so long ago".

They described their emotions when Noel Farrell changed his plea to guilty. Christopher said that he wasn't happy about this as "I wanted to go through with it, I wanted to say what I had to say".

Noel Farrell was described to have no reaction when his sentence was handed down by Justice Tony Hunt. Christopher said, "If I could explain it to you, it's like they brought him there and it was just his body. There was nothing inside, he was just blank".

Christopher said that the sentencing went on for over three and a half hours as the court heard statements and charges, as Noel Farrell "didn't even flinch" the entire time. "There was no acknowledgement on his part whatsoever".

They said how the judge instructed Noel Farrell to stand when being sentenced, and he didn't acknowledge this and stayed seated. He was asked again by the judge to stand and he did so reluctantly and apathetically after receiving a nudge.

The siblings received an apology from Noel Farrell through his solicitors in court, as Christopher said that the solicitor that read it out "was crying whenever she was saying it, as she listened to every charge". He said that tears were also rolling down the judge's eyes, as he said even the prison officers had their hands over their ears to not listen to what was being read out in court.

The siblings say that it is "pathetic" that Noel Farrell did not apologise himself and instead used his solicitor to do so. With all the charges against Noel Farrell in accumulation, this ended up being 237 years against him that was read out as individual charges in court.

"I have never heard of this many years in court charges in my life", said Jessica.

"They thanked Judge Hunt for hearing them out. The judge gave Farrell a 20 year sentence, given his age of 70 years old, but did say that if Farrell

was in his 50s or 60s, that he would have "no problem handing him the maximum sentence and even further". The siblings were asked what has helped them survive through to this day.

"I keep asking myself the same question, I don't know", said Christopher. Amanda said that it is her kids that help her get through everyday.

"If you dwell on something like that, it'd ruin you", said Jessica. "It did ruin us", Christopher added. They described how "they all turned to something", and how they had their own individual issues with alcohol, drugs, eating disorders and self-harm as a result of not understanding their emotions, as they turned to other means "to numb away the pain", they said.

They each spent a large part of their lives in care, as they are now starting to "come together and try to be a family, but we're broken in so many ways and in some ways it's irreparable".

"We're not united, but we're working on it", Christopher said. Another daughter said that Noel Farrell "robbed the life we could have had as siblings".

They spoke about their reasoning for waiving their anonymity as they would like their story to be a message to other survivors to speak out. Christopher spoke about his experience with doing so, as he said he initially found it difficult to speak out because of the stigmatisation of men being a victim of sexual abuse.

He said that when he was speaking to one of the guards over this case, the guard informed him that he was the first man in over 14 years to come forward and follow it through. Christopher said that there are too many cases of men getting involved in crime, or being suicidal over these issues and he wanted justice to be served regardless of the stigmatisation.

"I know how hard it would be for a person in my situation to come out and speak, the embarrassment, the shame, the guilt that you're feeling, but there is light at the end of the tunnel if you get the right help", he said.

He said that he was 40 years of age before he had plucked up the courage

to speak about it.

"Before that, I was still that scared little boy that couldn't come out and get what I was looking for".

"I'm not that scared little boy anymore", he said firmly. He said that one day it clicked with him why he couldn't eat or sleep properly, "I couldn't function".

He said that he "learned to be a man from a young age because I had to be". "If one other person could come forward from what we've achieved, I would die happy". Christopher has also offered to speak to people in similar situations, and urged people to contact him if they wish to do so. Jessica said to other survivors that might be scared to speak out, "to not be afraid. We were afraid - but in the end it was worth it, justice was served.

"It's a hard thing to do, to talk about something that you've never talked about before".

She described how the court system can be draining and that "you think no one is believing you, but they are - it's just the way it works".

"People need to know that at the end of the day you will be believed, you will be heard - but you have to take the first step. It won't happen by just sitting at home thinking about it, go and make your statement".

They say that the last few years of court proceedings are a blur to them all.

Another sibling said that "it takes a lot to finally say I didn't deserve this, I didn't deserve this, I didn't deserve this - and I'm going to fight for me". "I'm going to fight for that little girl who lost everything from day one",

she said.

They said to people who have been victims of sexual abuse, that "they are not alone, their voices matter".

They want people to understand about the long-term impact of abuse, as they said "it will never leave us, but we have to put it to the back of our mind".

Jessica said that they are all "doing the best they can at the moment, to give our kids the chance of a better upbringing to what we had, because that's what they deserve".

For now, the siblings said that they survive through their own children, who have supported them through this trial.

Amanda said that she didn't know what love was until she had her son. Christopher showed a message that his daughter Sophie sent to him a few days before the sentencing, as he said that's the reason why he keeps going.

His daughter said to him in this message that "You didn't just survive something horrible, you fought back, you sought justice and you gave that younger version of yourself the voice he was denied".

"You became the kind of dad every child deserves, even though you never got that yourself".

As this message was read out to the siblings in this interview, they embraced each other, wiping tears from their eyes. Christopher nodded after this message from his daughter was read out and said, "We did something right".

"I was still that scared little boy that couldn't come out and get what I was looking for. I'm not that scared little boy anymore".