

**Manawatu Evening Standard**  
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**Abuse claims target church**  
**by Jonathan McKenzie and NZPA**

A Palmerston North woman has sparked an investigation into alleged sexual abuse at a Presbyterian Support Services children's home more than 40 years ago.

The woman, who cannot be named for legal reasons, says she was abused by a worker while she was in care at a home in the Wellington suburb of Berhampore.

Church welfare organisation Presbyterian Support Services is investigating the allegations against the former employee of the home, which was run by the organisation. The alleged offender is now in his 80s and denies the allegations.

The woman told the Manawatu Standard recently that the effects of the alleged abuse had led her to a life of misery and prostitution on the streets of Wellington.

She said she wanted justice, compensation from the church and for the alleged offender to own up to his actions.

Today Trevor Roberts, a spokesman for the Wellington-based central region branch of the organisation, confirmed that two sexual abuse claims had been received and investigated and it had recently been made aware of another two allegations.

Mr Roberts said the organisation had a pretty robust policy in respect to such allegations.

"When an allegation of any sort is received, whether it's a failure of care or something more serious, we investigate it to the extent that we can for our own purposes.

"If there's an allegation of criminal conduct, we urge that the matter be dealt with by the police."

He said it was the complainants' role to go to the police.

He said that internal investigations had been carried out in respect of two of the individuals concerned and the organisation recommended both to go to the police.

Mr Roberts added that many of the people who could talk about the allegations were dead.

But Detective Inspector Doug Brew of Palmerston North said on television last night that there appeared to be a case to answer.

The Palmerston North complainant said she was in mental health care for years dealing with the after-effects, but now she was on a better path and in a stable relationship and home.

She claims that the man also stole Christmas and birthday presents from residents of the home, as well as money.