

# The Manning family

**S**tephen Manning returned to Ireland from Japan to set up home with his wife and three young children. He planned to set up a language school.

What started out with a vision to give his children an idyllic rural upbringing spiralled into a nightmare.

Manning claims that he and his family were subjected to a relentless campaign of systematic harassment, abuse, intimidation and death threats.

He and his Japanese wife have lodged High Court actions against An Garda Síochána, the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, the Courts Service, the Attorney General, and the HSE's Child and Family Agency (Tusla).

The Manning family's troubles began on the side of a football pitch. In 2009, a defamatory letter was published by locals in Co Mayo, accusing Stephen Manning of serious inappropriate conduct when he was around children as a referee. Manning claimed that, as a result of this letter and his subsequent legal action, over 700 incidents of harassment and intimidation occurred, mainly involving false allegations on the internet.

"They were vile," he told *The Sunday Business Post*.

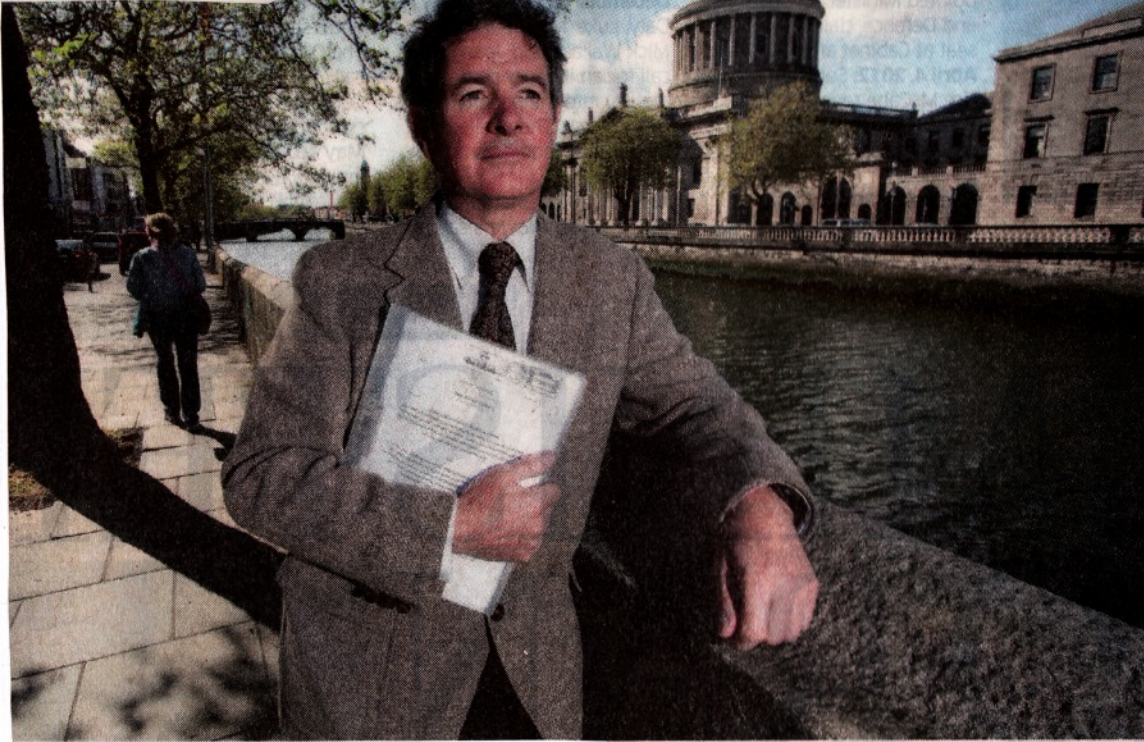
Manning alleges that gardaí repeatedly told him that criminal investigations were ongoing and that suspects had been arrested, detained and questioned. He alleges that gardaí were complicit in protecting the perpetrators of the attacks – and that certain gardaí were directly involved in conducting them.

Manning's case was covered by the local Mayo News at the time. It reported that Manning was "awarded damages of €38,500" after he sued the committee of Achill Rovers Football Club for sending the letter to the Mayo School Boys and Girls league.

The Mayo News reported on the case against Achill Rovers Chairman, George Collins, the club's secretary, Philip McNulty, and seven other co-defendants.

The newspaper said that Westport Civil

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**Stephen Manning: a move to the west of Ireland spiralled into a nightmare**

Court heard that Manning, a former teacher, was the subject of three attempted assaults in Achill.

The judge, Justice James O'Donohoe, said Manning had been 'grievously hurt' by the accusations and had suffered 'great emotional distress'. The judge awarded Manning the damages plus costs.

The case went to a retrial after a judicial review. Afterwards the former committee of Achill Rovers issued an apology to Manning for the 'upset and distress' caused to him and his family.

In court, it emerged that the letter, which was drafted by George Collins, was not actually seen by the rest of the committee before it was sent. Manning told the court that the letter was written maliciously because he had a falling out with Collins.

Manning said his name appeared on an

IRA website alleging he was a member. He was also investigated by the HSE after they received an anonymous letter. He said his family was interviewed and asked questions about him before he was 'completely vindicated'.

An out-of-court settlement of damages for defamation was agreed. The judge in that case, Judge Raymond Groarke, commented that it was 'horrific stuff'.

Manning and his family have since moved, but he maintains he has been subjected to ongoing abuse since then.

In his affidavit to Taoiseach Enda Kenny, he describes a recent incident involving his children.

According to Manning, "two unidentified men dressed in black", accompanied by two uniformed gardaí, approached his house in January.



**Manning had been 'grievously hurt' by the accusations and had suffered 'great emotional distress'**

"My wife and I were at a hospital appointment, and our two daughters aged 12 and 14 had been sent home from school

that morning due to a power cut. They were under strict instructions not to let anyone into the house," he wrote.

"For approximately 45 minutes, these four men stood outside the house and intimidated and harassed our girls."

Manning says he was summoned to an urgent meeting with HSE Child Protection Services, now named Tusla, after a report was forwarded by gardaí to Tusla.

Manning has a written document confirming that gardaí stated that their children had been left alone in the house for three days (he says this was untrue).

Manning says Tusla confirmed that they 'needed to do a full investigation' regarding the Garda referral. He says that when he told authorities that his children had recorded the whole episode on video, Tusla dropped its investigation.

Manning says he subsequently asked Tusla to investigate what he described as incidents of "harassment and intimidation" against his family. He says he was told it was "not their remit" and that Tusla referred him back to the Garda.

Manning made a complaint to GSOC (Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission), but was told the complaint was 'inadmissible' on the grounds that the gardaí concerned were carrying out 'normal policing duties'.

"We wrote back to GSOC denouncing their response as inane and asinine, but have got nowhere", he said.

Manning says that all he has seen is "conspiracy, collusion and criminality being facilitated and covered up by agents of the state" – "and all with the apparent support of the powers that be – all the way to the top."

He and his wife have filed High Court actions for failure, neglect and/or breach of statutory duty; denial of due service; failure to uphold the law and the Constitution; abuse of authority; suppression of criminal activity and facilitation of the same; harassment and intimidation and facilitation of the same against various state agencies listed above.

Manning established Integrity Ireland 18 months ago. He describes it as a proactive resource for determined citizens who want to see a fundamental change in the way Ireland does business – especially in law enforcement, the legal profession and the courts.