

Probe into claim of child 'sex slave'

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THE Children's Authority has launched an investigation into allegations an eight-year-old girl was being sexually assaulted by a male relative.

The authority stepped in and removed the child from the home last week Thursday.

She has been placed in the care of a female relative.

Police are also searching for a man who lived in the house with the child and her elderly grandmother.

The grandmother told police she was not aware the child was being abused.

The Children's Authority has since dismissed reports it failed to act on reports the child was being sexually abused by the relative.

Cheryl Moses-Williams, com-

munications manager, stated in a release that the authority's Emergency Response Team (ERT) was dispatched to investigate the allegations as soon as the matter was highlighted in the media.

"The authority has found child protection concerns and is taking steps to immediately address those concerns and ensure the child's safety," she stated last Friday.

A relative claimed the matter was reported to the Children's Authority since January, but was never investigated.

Moses stated, however, initial reports were made to the authority's hotline about the child, but did not identify any concerns of child sexual abuse.

Moses said following a report in the media that the child was being used as a sex slave, the authority acted.

She said under the Children Act

2012, the authority is mandated to investigate all reports of abuse.

"Once a report of child abuse or mistreatment is brought to the authority's attention, the investigation process is initiated to substantiate or not substantiate the allegations, with a view to determining whether the child is in need of care and protection and what interventions would be appropriate in the child's best interest," she stated.

Attorney General Faris Al-Rawi said on Saturday he was not convinced the Children's Authority failed to rescue the child.

He said it was unlikely the Children's Authority would be aware of the situation and not deal with it.

The authority has appealed to the public to report all suspicions or incidents of abuse to its hotline at 996 and 800-2014.

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