

**PE1651/SSS**

**Sandra Teale submission of 12 January 2018**

My life devastated by Prescription medication

In 1977 I became ill and was taken at 15 years old to my then local GP in Nottinghamshire. I had stomach pains and was anxious before my school examinations. I was seen by a local doctor with my father and they could not decide what the stomach pains were, but felt there was an emotional cause.

I was sent to a child psychology unit and seen by a psychiatrist and psychologist who diagnosed possible epilepsy with anxiety. I was prescribed Valium and another drug that I have not been able to find the records of. After 6 months of outpatient investigation and missing many of my 'O level' examinations, a child psychologist diagnosed anxiety and depression. Being a minor I was given the yellow and blue tablets, that I now know were Valium daily by my mother. (now deceased) I do not feel she had any idea of the poison I had been prescribed by the NHS.

When at my GP's practice at home he told me I would be on them for life, as he was on cigarettes. Appalling.

In 1982 I moved with my family to Merseyside, age 20, taking the pills as instructed. Every time I complained of feeling agitated with restless legs and or anxiety/depression I was given antidepressants and up-dosed to eventually 60 mg of Valium .I still had no idea it was the drugs that were causing the problems.

In 1987 after so much loss of education and seeing many doctors in the private sector, My then husband and I conceived my only son. I was terrified through the pregnancy as a new doctor after seeing my medications, explained my new born may be underweight or/and have cleft palette because of the medication I was on. I was devastated and my blood pressure went off the scales through the pregnancy. He turned out to be well, just slightly underweight. After giving birth I was scared of my very mixed emotions and inability to bond with my new born. I locked myself in the maternity toilets and the depression and anxiety was unbearable. I was cold turkeying (going without medication) as I thought the hospital would give me my usual medications, but they wouldnt. That 2 weeks were horrendous beyond belief and not one doctor looked at my records to see what was happening. My then husband sorted out a prescription with the new young GP and I went home shaken up and reinstated with the 50 mg dose.

After 4 years of feeling anxious and very depressed hardly able to go out of the house, my husband became frustrated with my behaviour as did I, I was an emotional wreck.

I went to the doctors in 1991 and happened to look up at the wall. There was a small card with the Initials of CITA The Council for Involuntary Tranquilliser Action. I read the information that was written by pharmacology nurse Pam Armstrong. It was my life line. All the symptoms were explaining why I was suffering the anxiety, panic, detachment, agoraphobia and non feeling. The doctor had no clue about the symptoms but mentioned that I should start reducing my dose. I was on 56 mg of Valium

The next evening I went to see Pam Armstrong at Crosby, Merseyside and myself and 40 strong people started to make sense of our 'symptoms'. The relief to find out there had been nothing 'wrong' with me in the 1<sup>st</sup> place was overwhelming. I returned to my GP's but they did not want to know and put me on Anti depressants. The name of them seems to have been removed from my electronic medical records. Because of my continued withdrawal symptoms, my now ex husband and I divorced. I now understand that the majority of our 'issues' were due to the misinformation of the drugs I was taking and the silence of the 'professionals' I had seen year after year.

Over the next 10 years I was still agoraphobic and when CITA closed because of funding and Pam Armstrong's death, I stayed in my house except to collect prescriptions. I started to lose hope. My one beacon of light was seeing my son, grow up (now 30) and the knowledge that I had dropped to 36 mg and come off anti depressants. I had to keep fighting. I got out but only when I up dosed. I have only released after reading the Ashton Manual and other materials online, that the cause of 99% of my problems have been my benzodiazepines and over the 1990's the added antidepressants. In my quest for a 'cure' I have lost my home, my marriage, my health and education. I am fortunate to be alive at 55 and am now tapering, still on 25 mg, with no help from any medical professional, In fact the very opposite. The lack of any support or understanding of these groups of drugs and the whole silent treatment of 'patients' and the doctors/ NHS's absolute disinterest and lack of funding appalling in a civilised society. I fully support PE1651 and all those who represent Truth and justice.

With thanks for allowing my voice to be heard