

## Anonymous submission of 31 January 2023

### PE1979/N: Establish an independent inquiry and independent national whistleblowing officer to investigate concerns about the alleged mishandling of child safeguarding enquiries by public bodies

I fully support this petition as I have nowhere left to turn.

When my daughter was in her early teens she suffered from serious mental health difficulties including suicide attempts. She spent 3 months as an inpatient in a psychiatric hospital. During this time her condition worsened to the point where she became violent towards staff and she was “sectioned”. Unfortunately the consultant discharged her because her behaviour was too disruptive to the ward. At this point her mental state was terrible and she refused to come home, so she was placed in the “care” of social work.

There followed a litany of failings that have had life-long consequences for her, including:

- A social worker noted on her file that my husband and I had agreed to her being placed in “care”. We had not.
- Once in “care” she tried to take her own life again and again. The police were adamant that she should be cared for in a more suitable setting, and the mental health assessment team agreed, but social work refused to consider other options until some time later. By this time my daughter had suffered untold trauma including being restrained with handcuffs and leg restraints.
- Social work prevented me from seeing her for months on end, and family relationships were severely damaged.
- I asked whether the council was going to undertake some form of review of how her care had been mismanaged, bearing in mind she had nearly died. I was assured that an internal review was being undertaken but some time later I was told that no such review was being done.
- When I submitted a formal complaint, a senior manager offered to look into the complaint personally rather than going through the formal channels. This person had been a key decision maker in the events that I was complaining about. I felt that I needed to

draw the potential cover-up to the attention of someone more senior, so I wrote to the Chief Social Worker letting her know what had happened. I did not receive a reply.

- Senior managers maintained that a “robust risk assessment” had been undertaken prior to placing my daughter in an open residential unit. I challenged the council to produce evidence of this but they were not able to. By this stage I was in touch with the Mental Welfare Commission to try to progress matters. Many months later, when pressed by the MWC, a senior manager from social work admitted that “a specific risk assessment was not undertaken”.
- My daughter made various statements about allegations of abuse. A social worker noted her comments but failed to inform any other agencies such as the police or the NHS. Later, a senior social work manager stood by the decision to withhold this information. It is impossible to describe how much damage was done by these decisions - family relationships were severely damaged and most importantly my daughter did not receive the right mental health support that she so badly needed.
- Edinburgh council have recently acknowledged “illegality, maladministration and injustice” (their words) within their secure care units, where my daughter spent many months. There is no knowing what she suffered while she was there. Whilst the report into secure care has not been made public, it’s clear from the recommendations that restraint was used inappropriately and that allegations of abuse were not dealt with properly. This happened on the watch of current senior council officers but the council seem to be rolling out their usual excuses about any alleged abuse being historic and staff having moved on.

Since these events I have raised the issues with a number of people including a senior MSP. I provided input to the Care Review in 2018. I also gave evidence to both Tanner inquiries. Nothing has come of any of it and there is nowhere else for me to turn to. **Parents, carers, children, young people and staff need an independent body to investigate concerns, before more lives are ruined.**

Just recently, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (England & Wales) stressed the importance of transparency and the duty to report potential wrongdoing. The current attitude within some public bodies is

the exact opposite – secrecy reigns, and when challenged they close ranks and throw all their institutional weight behind keeping facts out of the public domain. This has to change. Matters must be taken out of the hands of councils as they have consistently proved that they are not capable of managing things themselves. **It's time for a public inquiry – now – before further documents are tampered with or other evidence is buried.**