

# Anonymous submission of 14 April 2023

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

Up to mid-2022 I was a full-time senior social worker, with over 30 years' experience in child protection and managing high risk sex and violent offenders, at a Scottish local authority.

### **Mismanagement of High Risk Sex and Violent Offenders**

In June 2020, I provided the local authority with a 42 page document, with detailed case examples, highlighting serious failings in the management of high risk sex and violent offenders.

The local authority later assured me it had addressed the issues raised. It failed, however, to interview me about my claims and refused to give details of its findings or actions. It appeared managers were being protected and serious failings in the council's responsibility to protect the public were being covered up.

### **Chronic Systemic Failings in Risk Management**

The 42-page document, including real/current case examples, detailed the following systemic, failures of risk management across the authority's Criminal Justice Social Work department:

1. Failures to follow the authority's Risk Assessment Policy which states:
  - a. Effective risk management depends on all reasonable steps being taken in the light of reliable assessments that have evaluated and weighed all relevant information; on decisions being recorded and implemented; and on policy and procedure being followed appropriately.
2. Failures to adhere to The National Outcomes and Standards for Social Work Services in the Criminal Justice System which note that defensible decisions include, amongst other factors, evidence that:

- All reasonable steps have been taken;
  - Information has been collected and thoroughly evaluated;
  - Practitioners and their managers adopt an investigative approach and are proactive.
3. Failures to read critical risk assessment reports
  4. Failures to properly document the nature of all serious sexual and violent offending
  5. Failures to analyse offending patterns/contextualise offending
  6. Failures to read previous case notes
  7. Failures to read previous case conference minutes
  8. Failures to discuss past and current offences once the sentence has been passed
  9. Failures to develop adequate risk management plans before recommending a move to open prison / release on licence.
  10. An uncritical acceptance of other agencies risk assessments
  11. Failures to take professional 'ownership' of reports i.e. unacknowledged plagiarising/cut and pasting of other people's work
  12. Failures to undertake appropriate/systematic victim safety planning
  13. Failures to liaise with partner agencies
  14. Failures to implement case conference decisions
  15. Failures to take adequate family histories (in particular to determine if the offender would have any contact with children)
  16. Failures to take adequate relationship histories (e.g. past/present partners and their children)
  17. Failures to enquire about trauma the offender may have experienced
  18. Failures to seek adequate information to inform a realistic formulation of offending
  19. Prioritising 'fairness' to the offender over the risk of harm they pose to the public.

The document related to the management of 'high risk' offenders but also raised valid questions as to how 'low' and 'medium' risk offenders were being managed.

The concerns raised echoed the findings of past and current Serious Case Reviews into criminal justice/probation disasters in Scotland and in the rest of the UK.

## **Raising Concerns With External Agencies**

I raised my concerns with the local authority in question in 2020, using internal council procedures. Following its apparent cover up I then sent my concerns to the following external agencies:

- The Scottish Social Services Council
- The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
- The Care Inspectorate
- Keith Brown, then Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Scottish Government
- The Scottish Government's Public Protection Unit
- The Risk Management Authority.

Each agency expressed concern but stated the issues I was highlighting were **not part of their remit.**

It is for this reason I support the call for a public inquiry into child abuse and safeguarding mishandling.

It appears that, in relation to revelations about local authorities failing to protect the public, the Scottish Government cannot intervene of itself. It can only set broader policy objectives for the future rather than intervene in ongoing scandals and cover-ups.

The Scottish Government relies on other, ad-hoc/ arm's length, agencies, such as the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, and the Care Inspectorate, to intervene.

The secondary scandal here is the failure of these agencies to get their hands dirty and be pro-active in instigating investigations. They appear not to want to look under the rocks for fear of what they may find.

If need be, I will happily provide the Committee with a (redacted) copy of my original 42-page submission to the local authority and to the other agencies.