

Patricia Hewitt submission of 2 November 2022

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

I have family members who were totally failed by a number of public bodies including the NHS, Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the local authority education department. My family members were diagnosed on the Autistic Spectrum in their late teens, a year later lightbulb moment when we followed through on the PDA Profile of Autism.

I was horrified at the extent I was bullied, accused of slander, and threatened to cover up so called professionals' incompetence when I complained about their serious failings. I had numerous doors slammed closed to me, with no consequences to the perpetrators.

I complained to the GTCS twice. The first time I was referred back to the local authority as it was too serious a matter. Second time, the case dismissed at the start. Surely if numerous education laws were broken, and I was indirectly threatened with slander then that is totally unacceptable behaviour? There is no accountability whatsoever. Education laws are worthless and the Autism Strategy is not fit for purpose.

I was asked to give evidence during the Scottish Borders teacher abuse case recently. My family members were not part of the actual case itself but gave evidence as to how the local authority dealt with serious complaints.

The NHS were no better. I was told I could destroy a professional's career when I complained about CAMHS failing to recognise Autism in one family member. It didn't matter that my family member would spend their life on benefits with serious mental health problems after the involvement of that professional.

The MSP's Code of Conduct is another route I tried. Since the MSP involved had written letters, I never received anything from them, that

was their get out clause. The other MSP I had contacted had moved on and the issue was now outwith his jurisdiction.

I also approached local police, but again went into a bottomless pit.

One of my family members was illegally restrained and secluded at school prior to any Autism diagnosis. Both were illegally excluded for five months from education without any paperwork. The social workers involved at the time did nothing to raise concerns about failures in safeguarding.

After approaching my MSP for support, he wrote to the Cabinet Secretary, and I was fobbed off again to Enquire and the Govan Law Centre. Nothing was followed through by Ministers. Locally, we had a meeting instigated by my MP and the local care commissioner, basically a total whitewash to cover each other's backs and the only outcome "we need to put some training in". Again, NO accountability.

What has happened over the years has very nearly destroyed our family. We have had one family member handcuffed by police before they were recognised on the Autistic Spectrum. It's been me who eventually worked everything out. The lack of understanding of the Autism Spectrum is generally pathetic. So many missed opportunities over the years, but plenty of blame on the family.

One family member was seriously burnt at school. Once again there were serious safeguarding failures. Lessons most certainly hadn't been learnt by previous serious accidents within local schools. The local authority were dishonest with the Judge, and it took a second accident before any significant changes occurred.

Finally, it was suggested I petition Scottish Ministers as a way forward. As I have stated during previous petitions "the only system that works 100% effectively in Scotland is the system to cover up the truth".

I am an admin on several Additional Needs Support Groups and I can assure you our case is far from unique.

There is most certainly a need for a whistleblower people can approach directly, and an independent enquiry. After the experience my family has had, I support this petition 100%.