

Stephanie Morrison submission of 10 January 2023

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

A family member whilst attending a school for SEN (Special Educational Needs), was restrained with excessive force on several occasions and sustained severe physical and psychological injuries, which have had a profound and long-lasting impact on their health. The then child/adolescent also witnessed other children/adolescents being restrained with excessive force by staff members at this school.

Calls to the school to discuss my concerns were not responded to, some members of staff appeared poorly trained and were unable to communicate in a professional manner when questioned regarding teaching practices. Children who were referred to this school were funded by local authorities. These were vulnerable children who would have been unable to express their experiences of abuse with clarity, due to their varying degrees of learning difficulties and underdeveloped verbal communication skills. A culture of coercive control existed at the school with certain staff members. A number of years have passed since this abuse took place; however, the long-lasting legacy of such abuse has caused immense damage to my family member, coupled with the long-term costs and poor health outcomes which results from such childhood experiences.

There were limited checks and scrutiny of this school by the appropriate statutory bodies, which is borne out by the lack of appropriate School Inspection Reports within a specific timeframe, which allowed a culture of abuse and coercive control to continue unchecked. An honest dialogue is required in Scotland to take responsibility for the practices which failed to safeguard and protect vulnerable children. As awareness and understanding of the long-lasting effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences has continued to be researched and validated by evidence,

as discussed by [Spratt and Kennedy in the British Journal of Social Work](#), Scotland as country must do more to safeguard children.

I fully support this petition for a wider inquiry and remit to establish the requirement for an independent officer.