



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01418

Name of petitioner

Katherine Alexander

Petition title

Safeguarding vulnerable people

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to compel all local authorities to ensure that all social work management posts are held by professionally trained and accountable registered social workers.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

I have discussed these issues with a member of my family's MSP who in turn has appraised my MSP.

Petition background information

The background to this petition is my personal experience with a member of my family who has had 24:7 care in his own home since being discharged from a long stay hospital in December 2003. He thrived supported in his own tenancy until December 2008 when he was catastrophically injured. I raised my concerns about the reporting of potential care failures to the police and health and safety executive as a complaint to SCSWIS, they could not investigate as the manager was not a registered practitioner but a Council officer. I forwarded a complaint to the SPSO they advised me they could not investigate decisions and actions which were discretionary powers invested in a social work resource.

I am petitioning Parliament only because I consider it to be in the public interest to challenge the existing practice of local authorities. The practice of placing non-registered practitioners in senior management in social work resources exposes vulnerable people to the potential that harm, from inadequate care within local authority service provision, is being systematically concealed and is not being reported as a crime by unregistered practitioners accountable only to their employer.

Significant harm from the failure to provide adequate care is defined as abuse within Vulnerable Adult Support and Protection guidelines issued to local authorities following the introduction by the Scottish Parliament of the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007. This legislation was written to protect vulnerable people. It directs local authorities to investigate allegations of abuse in an open multidisciplinary environment. It is incumbent on the professionalism of a social work resource to determine when it is appropriate to apply these procedures. In practice, this decision is

deferred by trained social work case workers at grass roots level who suspect abuse, to senior social work management. When the senior managers are not trained social workers there is no professional accountability or independence of action.

By appointing untrained council workers to senior management roles in social work, local authorities can protect the Council from exposure of cases of harm by failure to provide adequate care by evading investigation. Corporately the Council is completely unaccountable for their action as a public service because the use of adult protection procedures is considered to be vested in the professional discretion of social work.

Without my intervention this incident would not have been reported to the HSE or investigated by the police. The Scottish Parliament introduced legislation to protect vulnerable people from all types of abuse, including abuse by omission of adequate care within care services. Professional social workers are obliged by their code of conduct to act in the interest of their client. They cannot do this when untrained council officers who have no professional accountability gate-keep access to the procedures intended to protect the vulnerable, to protect the corporate interests of their employer.

I consider my experience could be potentially replicated in any local authority where the social work resource is managed by unregistered practitioners.

I would urge the Committee to clarify with the SPSO as to the limitations of their role in commenting on complaints about the actions of a social work resource.

I would urge the Committee to confirm with SCSWIS that at present it is not a requirement that senior managers within a social work resource be registered practitioners.

I would urge the Committee to question SCSWIS on the professional accountability of senior social work managers who are not registered practitioners.

I would urge the Committee to ask SCSWIS if they consider social work practitioners deference to line managers who are untrained council officers diminishes the professional accountability of the resource.

I would encourage the Committee to establish from SCSWIS that normal practice within resources involves deference from trained staff at grass roots level, to decisions and instructions from heads of services in the reporting and investigation of allegations of potential abuse within their services.

I would urge the Committee to seek guidance from SCSWIS on the risks to vulnerable people from failure to act in an independent and professionally accountable manner when investigating and reporting allegations of potential harm from the failure to provide adequate care in service provision.

I would urge the Committee to consider if council officers with no professional social work training, and no independent professional accountability, should be directing the use of discretionary social work powers, or directly reporting in circumstances where the Council might be culpable for harm by gross care failure.

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01418>

Related information for petition

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NO

How many signatures have you collected so far?

1

Closing date for collecting signatures online

N/A

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