

PE1494/F

7th December 2013

Dear Mr Howlett,

I would like to submit the attached written submission in support of Hunter Watson's petition on Mental Health Legislation PE01494 which is being considered on 10th December.

Yours sincerely

Claire Muir

Submission by Claire Muir

At a meeting with the nursery my husband and I were told that my daughter was used as a rag doll by the older children. Incensed by this I asked my health visitor Ms K if she thought this was acceptable.

I read the nursery complaints procedure which said any complaint is confirmed in writing within 24 hours by the nursery. I asked them to comply with this and received a letter from the nursery dated 20th July, 2006.

Ms K said she'd come round to my house. Unbeknown to me she'd already phoned the nursery which said there was no cause for complaint and Ms K had decided it was all in my mind before she parked the car outside our home. I found it VERY frustrating as all I knew while she was with me was that she wouldn't listen but kept arguing and I found I was trying to convince her but I didn't know she'd made a decision it was all in my mind. Had I known about the phone call, I would have taken her to the nursery and shown her ALL the children had photos up and pictures up except my daughter who was without doubt not in a group.

Ms K then wrote the letter that led to me being sectioned, a letter dated 27th July 2006. That letter I did not see or know anything about until the first tribunal at which I was very drugged up.

I was unable to refute the allegations in the letter until I was out the hospital and was able to prove it was not all in my mind with my husband, friends and nursery letter, lots of substantial evidence. Useless if you don't have a chance to refute anything at the first tribunal.

The first time I met Dr B, the locum who sectioned me, he behaved like an agent provocateur and I thought he behaved like a mad bully for 3 hours. There was certainly no opportunity to show the letter from the nursery in order to establish that my concerns about my daughter's education were not paranoid delusions as Dr B imagined.

An MHO consented to the section based on this wrong information before he met me.

After much ado about nothing my first tribunal was set and I knew the date. This was the extent of my knowledge of tribunals. To say I was unprepared is an understatement. I still knew nothing about why I was detained, what the treatments were for or anything. During the tribunal the health visitor's letter was produced and the head of the tribunal made a reluctant Dr B give me a photocopy. The tribunal transcript states I was muttering but I thought with my advocate and my solicitor present my mutterings about having a chance to adjourn and discuss refuting the 'evidence' would be given some credence. After all what are tribunals for if you can't refute anything?

I was there, drugged up, confused, in a bright green summer maternity dress in October, a humiliating experience, seeing evidence for the first time – I would not have been surprised to see shackles on my ankles, I felt so dragged down and ill prepared. I'd been held by my jailors for three weeks, beaten up, drugged almost to death at one point, no fresh air, no fruit, no exercise. Lots of sensory deprivation and away from my 3 year old

daughter even though I was her main carer and stay-at-home mother. Lots of passive smoking. All that had kept me going was that I'd read John McCarthy, Terry Waite and Brian Keenan's books about how to survive as a prisoner. But they'd had no drugs.

When I asked what human rights I have I was told in no uncertain terms by several people I have no human rights as I am no longer considered human. Going into the tribunal, I was but a guarded captive whose drugs were like shackles. Dehumanised thus, the tribunal began. All the free people had had a rest at home, some time off to prepare and consider what to wear, have their hair done, see a mirror. What a nightmare! Then I had to sit and listen to lots of lies about me. My solicitor started by saying I was ill. I was made to look ill by the drugs. This was before people were even introduced.

Holding a heavily blacked out photocopy of Ms K's letter full of wrong assumptions, all I really knew was that this was obviously wrong. I was in no fit state to instruct without any guidance whatsoever. My solicitor was just a name on a scribbled list on a scrap of paper which my advocate showed me. Surely that is not how to choose a representative, particularly when one's life depends upon their expertise. The only conversation I had with her was when she overwhelmed me with forms to sign. To this day I have no idea what they were but assume it was to entitle her to legal aid. She talked over me when I mentioned the admission assessment saying I was not obviously detainable. No one seemed to agree with Dr B that I was ill, even senior staff on the ward wrote they disagreed. None of that came up. In fact, I had not been given any piece of paper to keep. Yes, I'd been given countless purple books and signed the solicitor's forms but the books just bore no resemblance to what was going on. I'd seen none of the evidence that I had a detainable mental disorder.

On the morning of the first tribunal my solicitor had been told I was too ill to attend. The MHO had not wanted me to attend. Somehow, his opinion of me being too ill to go was overruled.

After a consultant reported that he could find no signs or symptoms of a mental illness I eventually got out of hospital. However, the consultant imagined that it was the drugs that made me appear well so I was put on a community based compulsory treatment order. The MHO had me seeing people every day.

Dr B was someone who told lies. He did this most obviously on an application form to extend my compulsory treatment order. He claimed to have interviewed me on the 3rd May 2007. However, with the aid of my diary I was able to prove that would not have been possible. The Mental Welfare Commission required that another consultant interview me. That other consultant found that I was well but recommended that I remained on a compulsory treatment order on the grounds that Dr B had diagnosed me as being psychotic seven months previously.

Fortunately, I was eventually placed in the care of a different consultant. Since he could detect no identifiable psychiatric disorder he revoked the compulsory treatment order. That happened before the end of 2007.

Although it is now over six years since I was forced to take an antipsychotic drug, I worry in case the MHO who was instrumental in having me detained in September 2006 finds

another pretext for having me sectioned again.

Why aren't people entitled to at least a second opinion at the beginning of a section before any treatment other than being locked up can begin? In my case, several psychiatrists declared there was no psychiatric disorder or illness at all. Some gave this opinion only days before the MHO spent less than two minutes to give a second signature and one senior house officer gave this opinion after, on the day of forced admission. The law is wrong. It would only work if all doctors could be trusted. There are no safeguards to stop an MHO giving his signature just on the nod of the head from the psychiatrist. Or for an MHO to elect to section someone they have not yet met.

I now realize at no point did the MHO think I was mentally ill. He knew at the outset he could lie his way through anything.

It shouldn't be down to one person to lock up and inject another human being with no justification or explanation." As my case proves, it can happen to anyone, you or yours." This is sentence I used when I first wrote things like this. I now see how unassertive I was. OK it probably won't happen to anyone, who, but a mug would sit in a room with a tyrant for 3 hours and not complain?

Kafkaesque.