

## **PE1596/CC**

Meeting with the petitioner, Paul Anderson – 4 October 2019

At its meeting on 5 September 2019, the Public Petitions Committee agreed to invite the petitioner to give evidence at a future date.

It was agreed by both the petitioner and the Committee to conduct this meeting out with the Scottish Parliament at a location the petitioner was comfortable speaking to Committee Members about the issues raised in his petition.

At this meeting, the petitioner requested that his support worker from Wellbeing Scotland as well as the Chief Executive of Wellbeing Scotland be present at the meeting. The Committee was represented by the Convener, Johann Lamont MSP and Committee Member, Brian Whittle MSP.

This is not a verbatim record, rather a summary note of the issues raised during the meeting. The petitioner has confirmed that the information contained in this note represents an accurate reflection of the issues that were discussed.

During the meeting, the petitioner reiterated and expanded on points that he has made in previous written submissions regarding the importance of survivors having access to:

- long term one-to-one counselling;
- group work; and
- a consistent counsellor who they can build up a relationship with and trust over time and who can provide therapy but also advocacy when needed.

### **Issues raised with the Service provided by Future Pathways**

The petitioner explained during the meeting that survivors have expressed concern at a lack of engagement by Future Pathways (FP). Examples were given of meetings which FP had been invited to, at the express wish of survivors, but they had declined to attend.

The petitioner highlighted that as FP does not engage with survivors to allow them to explain their concerns about the support offered, the organisation is not [as] survivor-informed [as it could be].

The one to one counselling offered by FP is provided in 12 weeks blocks at which point it is reviewed to determine if the counselling is working and, if not, to change it. The petitioner explained during the meeting that the presence of a review is a concern for survivors, worried about a countdown to the end of the support. The petitioner explained that he is also concerned that this places pressure on support workers to force “progress” which is not achievable quickly when working with people who have suffered complex trauma.

FP does not offer group work. The petitioner explained how important this work was, as it gives survivors the opportunity to build friendship and support groups, an opportunity that they may not have with their own family etc. The petitioner explained

that FP wanted Wellbeing Scotland (WS) to stop group work if they came under the FP umbrella.

The FP Support Co-ordinator is not a counsellor. Whilst the petitioner stressed the courteous way that he had been treated by his own co-ordinator, who has helped him obtain practical support from the discretionary fund including a new phone, the role does not offer the same level of support as the support worker at WS. This support includes counselling and advocacy but also a relationship that does not begin and end with the counselling session.

The petitioner does not believe that the counselling support offered by The Anchor/FP can provide that kind of holistic support. He believes that it is a more clinical environment that is limited only to these sessions. The petitioner also explained that he was concerned that survivors were unable to access this counselling support without first having an assessment.

The petitioner explained that some survivors had told him that their experience of accessing support from FP has been, that they have been offered a range of options to choose from and they can “take it or leave it”. Some have told him that once they have accessed resources from FP, they feel that the organisation is done with them. That these survivors have not felt encouraged to have a longer-term relationship with the organisation or have the confidence to go back if they need more support. The petitioner has complete confidence that he can access support from WS as and when he needs it. He does not require constant counselling, but he can access it when required, without having to worry about this support being ‘time bound’ which gives him considerable piece of mind.

During the meeting, the Chief Executive of Wellbeing Scotland confirmed that survivors can only access counselling from one organisation. However, there is concern that the FP service has been created through a mental health service perspective, which is not appropriate for child abuse victims. Concerns were also raised that Health in Mind, who deliver counselling services for FP, use a team of more generic counsellors (including relationship and employment issues) rather than counsellors trained and experienced in complex trauma.

The petitioner is also of the view that CBT is unsuitable for people suffering complex trauma.

The petitioner would like to see a copy of the Support Agreement (from Future Pathways) that Future Pathways have/are asking survivors to accept in order for them to receive counselling. The petitioner stated that an updated version became active as of May 2018 in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

### **Outcomes sought by the petitioner**

- Greater transparency between FP and survivors. FP doesn't seem to be survivor-informed at present, or at least survivors don't have confidence that FP is survivor-centred.

- That FP holds a meeting with survivors to understand their concerns and their need for the kind of support that they have at present, which FP doesn't offer.