

**PE1596/FF**

Helen Holland submission of 26 January 2020

My name is Helen Holland and I am the chair of the survivor group INCAS. As a survivor group it was our understanding that this petition was raised because some survivors from In Care Survivors Service Scotland (ICSSS) were wrongly informed that when the support fund started they would lose the counsellor relationship they already had with that service.

While listening to Janine Rennie's evidence to the committee, she stated that ICSSS were the only people who had a counselling relationship with survivors.

I can tell you that within INCAS (In Care Abuse Survivors) organisation, we already had a number of members already receiving counselling from a therapeutic trauma informed practice whom we held a contract with.

The concerns around survivors having to end one counselling relationship they'd built up and start again was never at risk. The Scottish Government gave assurance that ALL survivors already in counselling would continue without disruptions to the survivors or therapists.

These talks were already taking place BEFORE the support fund was set up.

At the survivor support fund meeting which took place within the first three months of the service starting, survivor fears of losing counsellors was raised again and it was made perfectly clear that NO survivor would need to change counsellors. It was explained again that the Scottish Government were committed to funding all therapy already being undertaken by survivors, that the only change would be that Future Pathways would cover the costs of on going counselling until it reached a mutual end between survivor and counsellor.

That covers the original concerns of the petitioner. It now appears that this petition has moved in a totally different direction and the petitions committee has become a means to thrash out organisational funding for wellbeing Scotland.

As the chair of a group of almost 400 survivors and their families we feel that this petition and the tone of language used at recent hearings is unrepresentative of the survivors voices in general. The committee itself is upsetting and starting to raise suspicion and mistrust among the survivor community. Whilst I don't think that's intentional it's understandable that the wider groups of survivors are starting to question what gives the committee the right to quote in hearings " We went out and spoke to survivors " when it would appear that NO other survivor group has been contacted to seek their views of engaging with future pathways and how they feel about the service. This would provide a wider picture of how survivors feel about a service which for many has been a life changing experience.

I'm not suggesting that the service is perfect, INCAS have raised issues many times on behalf of our members but we have worked together to reach outcomes that became agreeable to all concerned. Hence the reason that survivors who have been following these committee hearings are finding them biased and at times aggressive

and attacking from the onset. Given that there are over 1400 survivors using the service, as a survivor group, we would ask that consideration be given to ALL survivors during the evidence and questioning of representatives attending committee hearings as those who are following them feel that the wider group are being ignored.

Survivors can't understand why this petition is still being heard when the fears being raised in the original petition PE1596 proved to be unfounded in the very early days.

The organisational disputes around funding should not be dealt with through the petitions committee otherwise the committee will quickly become overwhelmed in dealing with internal disputes from current service providers.

Funding for services is dealt with within the Scottish Government application processes and survivors are sick of being used by service providers as financial commodities. It's extremely upsetting when it's blatantly obvious that that's what's at the core of this petition being allowed to remain live.

I have given evidence on numerous occasions to the petitions committee and I would be happy to voice these concerns in person if the committee felt it would be helpful.

My only concern is that fear, suspicion and mistrust is affecting survivors at a time when they had moved towards trust and openness with a service set up to repair some of the harm they'd suffered because of the accusations being thrown around during the petitions committee hearings.