

Concerns over Scots abuse mishandling probes as investigation into approach to victim's case 'stalls'

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Concerns over Scots child abuse probes as investigation into handling of victim's case 'stalls'

CONCERNS have emerged that official investigations into historic child abuse cases in **Scotland** involving social workers are being kept on hold because of the Scottish child abuse inquiry.

It comes after it emerged that Richard Tracey, one victim of historic child abuse has seen his long-running fight for justice put back because of the on-going inquiry which is not expected to reach its final conclusion before October, 2019.

Former Scottish **Labour** Party leader Johann Lamont who is concerned about the development is seeking a meeting with Deputy First Minister John Swinney to get answers over the role of watchdog the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) in historic complaints.

It comes after Mr Swinney confirmed in a letter that "unlike some other professional regulators there is no time period provision set for the SSSC to investigate complaints about registered workers".

He said: "If a worker is on the register and if therefore currently working in social services, the SSSC will investigate if they think a complaint gives rise to a concern that the worker's fitness to practise is currently impaired."

Last week it emerged that the social worker under investigation for allegedly mishandling child abuse claims three decades ago retired in September, last year, before the watchdog can rule on the case.

Ayrshire social worker Hugh Quinn left his post in September, 2016, three months after the social services watchdog launched an initial investigation into claims he failed to remove 13-year-old Richard Tracey from a foster home despite acknowledging he was being "beaten".

It is also alleged the social worker disregarded allegations that Mr Tracey was being sexually abused.

Mr Tracey has been demanding that watchdog body SSSC take action against the social worker who he says failed to protect him.

Now 48, Mr Tracey was taken into care aged two and claims he was physically abused when in foster care by his late foster father and later in an Ayrshire children's home.

He further claims he was regularly sexually abused by a friend of his deceased foster father.

These claims of assault in residential care are confirmed by his social work case files from the early 1980s, while the claims of sexual abuse are also recorded.

As a result, Mr Tracey complained about Mr Quinn and has since accused Scotland's social services watchdog of shielding a social worker who left him exposed to violence and abuse.

After launching an investigation in the summer of last year, the SSSC announced it would not take action against the social worker but revealed in June that the case would be re-opened.

Now the SSSC has indicated that it wants to ensure they are abreast of key information in relation to past practices and expectations emerging from the Scotland-wide child abuse inquiry to assist with the review of Mr Tracey's case.

The watchdog later clarified that they would not be waiting till the inquiry's final conclusion, and would be in a position to have all the information it wants after the conclusion of Phase 1 tomorrow (Tuesday).

The SSSC insist Mr Tracey's is the only case awaiting any Scottish child abuse inquiry outcome.

Child abuse inquiry officials confirmed that they are only in the early stages of the inquiry with more key evidence to come.

Mr Tracey fears that nothing can be concluded on the case till the child abuse inquiry is completed in two years - and that it will have implications for other historic cases SSSC is handling.

Maree Allison, director of fitness to practise at the SSSC, in a review of the progress of his case told him: "We want to ensure that any key information that arises from the Inquiry that assists with understanding of that is included in our review and decision."

Mr Tracey said: "They are using the public inquiry to delay this case even more. Nobody believes that all this public inquiry should have any bearing on my case. It sounds like you have to wait for the public inquiry to finish which is a complete nonsense and it could affect people across the board."

And in a letter to Ms Allison he says: "It is clear from the correspondence to date that you do not have a clue in how to deal with this situation."

Ms Lamont, The **Glasgow** region **MSP** said: "I have concerns about the role of the SSSC in handling complaints such as these. The role of the SSSC in investigating historic complaints against someone who is still practising needs to be clear. "It cannot be that such cases remain uninvestigated. I have written to Deputy First Minister John Swinney seeking a meeting to clarify the SSSC role and to discuss with him concerns arising from the issues highlighted in this case. Survivors must have confidence in the systems designed to protect young people.

"The role of the SSSC is about current regulation so I am not clear why individual investigations would depend on the inquiry. It is essential that the role of SSSC is understood"

An SSSC spokeswoman said: "The key information [we are after is] about the practice and expectations at the time. We are aware that Phase 1 reports are potentially relevant to this. We will consider that information and conclude the investigation thereafter. With all of our investigations, if, at a later date, further information becomes available that could affect a decision, we will reopen the case."

The Herald has made attempts to contact Mr Quinn but he was unavailable for comment.