Adad was falsely accused of raping and prostituting his disabled daughter who cannot talk

Carmarthenshire council used the controversial 'facilitated communication' technique to take evidence from the girl, who cannot talk, and has since paid a substantial sum in compensation after taking the young woman into care unlawfully

BY MARTIN SHIPTON CHIEF REPORTER

A shocking case where the parents of a young woman with severe learning difficulties were falsely accused by council workers of sexually abusing their daughter and where she was taken away from the family home for six months has been referred to Public Services Minister Leighton Andrews.

Although Carmarthenshire council has admitted unlawfully depriving the young woman of her liberty, and paid her a substantial sum in compensation, the matter has not been reported to councillors.

The allegations were pursued by social workers after they spoke to the young woman using a technique called Facilitated Communication (FC), which best practice says is inappropriate for investigating abuse issues.

Now one councillor who knows of the case only because the family has confided in her, says there has been a major breakdown in governance procedures. She has asked Mr Andrews to intervene.

Original allegations
An Ombudsman’s report upheld a complaint made by the young woman’s father, who cannot be named for legal reasons.

It said that neither a police inquiry nor a protection of vulnerable adults investigation substantiated the allegations of sexual abuse.

The technique of facilitated communication sees a second person help someone use a keyboard or word board to spell out words. The young woman involved in the case is unable to speak.

The technique was validated by psychiatrist Dr Rowan Wilson, who subsequently admitted at a General Medical Council hearing that he had no knowledge of the system.

Welsh Government minister Leighton Andrews has been asked to intervene

After being taken away from her parents in October 2010, her father was arrested on suspicion of rape, sexual assault and prostitution, with his wife accused of aiding and abetting the offences.

Police and council complaint

A complaint to the Independent Police Complaints Commission over the police handling of the case concluded that Dyfed-Powys officers involved in the
investigation had not been fully familiar with guidance on investigating rape allegations.

Litigation brought by the parents against the council is at present unresolved.

In a letter to Mr Andrews, Sian Caiach, a Llanelli representative on Carmarthenshire County Council who is herself a medical doctor, states: “Following the resolution of this case, the health and social care scrutiny committee has not, despite my repeated requests to the committee chairs, discussed the case.

“The council acting monitoring officer, Linda Rees Jones, has said that the councillors have no right to discuss Ombudsman’s reports, criticising the council even if they are, as this one is, available to every member of the public on request and have already been reported in the press.

“She maintained that only special interest Ombudsman reports can be discussed, and these only if the Ombudsman specifically requests the councillors to be involved.

“As a councillor, I know the details of this case only from my contact with the family.

“I have no idea as to the safeguards which may or may not have been introduced subsequently to stop a repeat case and I know that the parents believe that the carers concerned are still working locally with vulnerable people.

“The health and social care scrutiny committee have not been informed of the case, now four years old. This council continues to hide failure.

“I believe that we councillors have no proper oversight. I am concerned that other families, who were not like the parents in this case – middle class articulate people with the funds to engage specialist lawyers – may have lost their children with learning difficulties to long term care in similar circumstances.

“This is not scrutiny of a local authority. It is undemocratic and dangerous.”

'No action required'

A Welsh Government spokeswoman said: “The role of the council’s health and social care scrutiny committee is to hold the executive member for health and social care to account for the quality of services delivered by the council.

“We would therefore expect the authority to have in place effective scrutiny processes and protocols that operate within a culture that is constantly seeking to improve service delivery.

“We cannot comment on the specific case highlighted. This is a matter for the council.”
Linda Rees Jones, head of administration and law at Carmarthenshire County Council, said: “Coun Caiach will be aware that this was a Section 21 Ombudsman report, not a Section 16 public interest report which requires full publication and referral to full council. We therefore satisfied all requirements of the report, and complied with all its recommendations.

“Without detailing sensitive particulars of this case, we can confirm that the Ombudsman noted our officers’ diligence in dealing with the matter, despite difficult circumstances.

“Furthermore, all consequent referrals to the Care Council for Wales and the Disclosure and Barring Service, at the request of the family, were concluded with no action required.”

Pam Palmer, the council’s deputy leader, said: “A recent independent peer review of council procedure concluded that our scrutiny arrangements are generally regarded by members and external agencies as being effective. Despite this, we have publicly stated our intention to further strengthen scrutiny arrangements as part of our efforts to improve the transparency of the council.”

https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/minister-asked-intervene-shocking-case-8662080