



Serving People and Professionals
in Contested Allegations of Abuse

PRESS RELEASE

Retractor of child sexual abuse claims sues NHS Trust

For immediate release on 17th October 2007

It is now 11 years since a young woman received treatment within the Perth and Kinross Healthcare NHS Trust Psychiatric Services, which she and her family are sure led to her making numerous false claims of sexual abuse which she later retracted in 1997. Katrina Fairlie, daughter of a former Deputy Leader of the SNP, Jim Fairlie, has had her legal case against the NHS Trust settled out of court at the eleventh hour. The legally aided case came to an abrupt end Tuesday 16th October 2007 when Ms Fairlie was deserted by her QC who insisted that she accept an out of court settlement. Ms Fairlie, who had been resolute in her determination to see this case through, is disappointed at the unsatisfactory ending of the case in this way.

Unlike similar cases which have reached the courts in the USA and seen substantial settlements, reprimand for practitioners and the closure of unsuitable units, drawing attention to the failings of some therapeutic treatments in the UK has proved much more elusive. Today's decision has brought to an end a rare opportunity to expose the dangerous practice of seeking to help clients in therapy to uncover alleged buried memories of sexual abuse when none exist. It is important to understand that this is not the same thing as guiding a client to talk about genuine traumas which they have been struggling to forget. In 1998 the Royal College of Psychiatrists prepared guidelines for practitioners to advise them how to avoid the pitfalls. However, some therapists at all levels of experience are still culpable for misleading their clients into believing that their current problems are due to a repressed history of childhood trauma about which they are unaware.

Without rigorous complaints procedures and the exposure of therapeutic malpractice through our justice system people remain unaware that these practices are still in use today. Within private practice our warning is simply *caveat emptor*; within the National Health Service, in which so many place their faith, we can only hope that being forewarned is to be forearmed.

To talk to Jim Fairlie and to his daughter, Katrina, please contact

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NOTES:

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1. The British False Memory Society was founded in 1993 in response to an epidemic of false claims by adults in therapy. The accusers believed they had 'recovered' unconscious memories of hidden past, but scientific evidence demonstrates that rather than being the recall of genuine experience, the process was one of the accumulation of false belief – hence the term 'false memory'. Such allegations are not new phenomena – they have been known to arise under certain cultural conditions for centuries. However, flawed therapeutic trauma theories and investigative systems, together with the huge growth in the unregulated counselling and therapy industry, have aggravated the problem over the past twenty years with the result that there is now a widespread problem of poor differentiation between true and false allegations of abuse. Such problems are also evident within the National Health Service Mental Health Services.

The BFMS is the leading charity addressing this problem and is supported by many of the most respected psychiatrists and psychologists in the UK, in the USA and other countries in the developed world. It regularly gives advice to individuals and families who have had their lives devastated through the destructive effects of false allegations. It is not uncommon for a whole network of family relationships to be destroyed as the result of false allegations made both in and out of therapy. .

2. Further information on the work of the BFMS can be obtained on the Society's website at www.bfms.org.uk