
SAW
The Staff and Workers Association



NEWSLETTER

The so called great and the good..

I can't ignore the fact that as we tail ended January Judge John O' Hara delivered his damning report and conclusions into the hospital killings of 5 children and the horrific subsequent cover up by senior doctors and senior management in the province.

It took Mr Justice O' Hara 14 years to investigate these killings and the cover ups. I would encourage everyone to read it.

The so called great and the good: those in senior positions in health trusts right up to chief executive held out conceding their liability to the last minute.

The great and good also abused their power by using huge sums of tax payer funds to deceive and protect their own skins, while heaping unnecessary suffering and agony on the families who lost their children.

Judge O' Hara quite rightly had harsh words for those corrupt people at the very top of our badly managed health service as the truth about what had repeatedly happened such as massive fluid overdoses, wrong cause of death on death certificates, a doctor who "couldn't remember" vital details, a consultant who was found guilty of "serious professional misconduct" but was allowed to continue in practice and so on, all painfully emerged, sometimes having to be dragged out of doctors and managers at the eleventh hour.

But this cannot be the end of the matter. Rather we must see it as the start of the matter. These were State funded killings.

Senior Trust management (and really they are to be mistrusted) can only survive and stay protected if they can get back to their default position of a culture of secrecy, blind indifference and disrespect shown to the very people they are responsible for looking after and handsomely paid to do so.

We, the public must not let them slip back, our lives and the lives of our children really do depend on it. They know enough to know that time may help them back to their default position as the collective public mind moves on.

Our trade union has represented health Trust employees who were suspended from work and dismissed for minor matters; they didn't kill anyone, they didn't cover up killings.

They don't have access to public funds either to hide behind Departmental lawyers, lawyers who assisted covering up the truth.

Judge O' Hara made clear observations about Departmental lawyers being complicit in preventing the truth from coming out.

We have recently had success in having a dismissal of a health worker reversed but what Judge O' Hara reveals is that those senior managers thought themselves above the law. His report confirms what we knew anyway: they have a contempt for the law that at least matches their contempt for human life.

On any comparable test these senior managers should be suspended immediately and dismissed. In fact the police should already be at their doors but alas there's no sign of them.

The GMC should be acting now as should the NMC. The NMC are quick to discipline nurses for minor infringements of their code, often removing a nurse's ability to practice and earn a livelihood.

The NMC in the province is accommodated by the Belfast health trust most likely heavily subsidised by tax funds too. Where are they here?

More importantly questions need to be asked about the police: if someone stole a half bottle of vodka from ASDA the police in numbers would arrest, charge and prosecute with haste yet they are still invisible here.

We must ask ourselves what sort of system is it that attempts to mislead a coroner to save the skin and reputation of individuals, a system that allows senior doctors and NHS senior management to self protection and allows them to use huge sums of tax funds to do so without accountability. Remember we are talking about the unlawful killing of children here.

What sort of dysfunctional, flawed system allows health trusts to spend years and years aggravating the grief of parents through denials, and stand accused of "doctors and managers not being relied upon to do the right thing at the right time?"

We have a system that is allowed to investigate itself and it consistently says "nothing to see here".

It is a system where there is little, if any, accountability at the top.

Judge O' Hara has done the spade work. It's over to us to make sure these senior managers become and remain accountable.

Francis