

PE1351/D

In Care Survivors Service Scotland response to PE1351/B

The In Care Survivor Service Scotland was established in 2008 through funding from the Scottish Government. It is now a thriving service with over 390 clients since inception, regular monthly hits to the website of over 5000 which is constantly being updated, over 80 clients being assisted to access records and a helpline available to survivors.

The majority of survivors have lost confidence in the organisation.

There is no evidence to back up this statement. From conversations with one development worker we know that some of these views come through survivors who have not accessed the service, nor attempted to access the service. The vast majority of survivors report satisfaction with the service as follows:

Feels that he appreciates the support & that it is very helpful to have someone to listen even though the problems continue - it helps keep him going.

Feels we are an organisation that has listened and hopes we can fill in the jigsaw! Worried about people sabotaging the service.

You have no idea the impact you have made in my life in the little time I have known you. It is a relief to know you are there to listen & take some of the pain. There is no one else, it's a long road but you'll help me walk it.

Very happy with support. Feels it has been very helpful & has helped restore confidence & ability to lead a normal life & not retreat into a shell.

After being stuck in a void for the last decade, I have to conclude that the service I have received from ICSSS has restored my faith in human nature and have found the staff a joy to work with.

And, from an 11 year old whose father is being supported: "My dad is a client of in care survivors service Scotland. So far (the service) has been so much help to me and my dad that it has made such a change to our lifestyle. My dad can now sometimes come for a walk with me. I know it will take a long time to recover but I just pray that (the service) is around for long enough for it to happen as she has been so much help and support to me and my dad and it has helped me a lot"

"I wish the service had been around when I reported it to the Police 5 years ago. I have used all the medical services and I finally have found someone who has the language, knowledge, awareness and ability to help me build my life"

"I have waited over 30 years for a service which is specific to abuse in care settings. I have tried many generic services in the past and have not had confident experiences of the service provided because it has not specialised in the needs that I have. Now you are here"

Website Comment:

"Having heard this web site advertised on Real Radio as I was in the car. I laterally halted with shock. I am numb to the fact this site is available, and humble at the same time. The amount of fear that entered my chest was crippling as memories flooded my mind. I am so grateful to have found a place that somehow comforts me in the knowledge that I am not alone. I visit almost every day re-reading your work. I have no idea yet how this sight can help me, but I do know when the time is right it will. Just a small thank you for being brave and strong enough to break the taboo."

The dropout rate for most services is around 30% do not attend. For ICSSS this is 5% which clearly shows that individuals are happy with the service they receive, continuing to engage.

This was a sweeping statement made by the petitioners who only know one or two individuals who have used the service. Due to the lack of knowledge of the "majority" of survivors using the ICSSS service it can only be presumed that this statement was made to discredit ICSSS. We will not comment on the reason for

doing so as it is not the aim of ICSSS or the partner agencies to discredit survivors (our role is to support them).

No market research at the start of the project.

Tom Shaw led an independent review into historical abuse of children in residential care in Scotland. The development of an advice and information hub was announced as part of the Scottish Government's response to recommendations in a review of historical abuse in residential care from 1950-1995 by Tom.

He stated at the time of implementation

"This is really good news. My report highlighted the necessity for advocacy, mediation and counselling services, easily accessible and related to appropriate information and advice. I am delighted that the Scottish Government has responded so wholeheartedly to my recommendation and I welcome the vision, structure, arrangements and funding which are manifest in the In Care Survivors Service Scotland."

The shape and design of the service was based on the report. Once the service was established a service user group was developed to gain views as to how service users would like the service to move forward. The service user group wanted the service to raise awareness to educational and other establishments about the needs of care survivors.

To respond to that request we produced a DVD made by survivors to raise awareness. Survivor consultation is an ongoing process by the service. An example of how we have responded to survivor needs is to have one worker providing both counselling and advocacy. This is because survivors told us they cannot cope with too many workers (bearing in mind some have other workers such as Tenancy Support). It also means that survivors, as they have told us, do not have to repeat their experiences to more than one person.

Poor and at times no communication with survivors

Existing service users are communicated with regularly by phone and letter (where permission to contact has been given). It is the policy of ICSSS not to communicate with survivors who have ended with the service unless permission has been given for future evaluation. The petitioners are referring to individual cases which fall outwith this criteria and we are unable to comment further without breaching confidentiality. The petitions committee are welcome to speak to survivors who do use the service to gain a more balanced view.

No monitoring of the service. CEO of Open Secret ended monitoring group without consultation.

The decision to end the monitoring group was made by the partner agencies at our partner meeting following the last monitoring group. The reason for doing so was that the group was not fulfilling its objectives of monitoring the service as individuals within the group were continuously bringing in issues that were outwith the remit of ICSSS. The group was an idea developed by the CEO of Open Secret and was not a requirement of the service.

The service is regularly monitored by the Scottish Government and has been since implementation. We have regular monitoring meetings with the Scottish Government, produce six monthly progress reports and have a monitoring sheet with outcomes that are regularly reviewed. We also consult and are consulted on areas such as the process for Restorative Justice, Records Management and Time to Be Heard.

Additionally we have a database of all the client evaluation paperwork and development workers complete monthly reports of their work. The CEO and Project Manager also monitor reports from individual development workers, which are submitted monthly and include the number of sessions provided/offered per service stream, and include reporting on the development work such as networking, delivering training and presentations and being members of various forums around health.

In addition consultation groups are being developed to replace the monitoring group involving service users and supportive family members who use the service.

3 managers of ICSSS in 1 year

ICSSS has had the same management structure since the start. The management structure is the CEO of Open Secret, Deputy CEO of Open Secret, Manager of KASP, Manager of MAF, Manager of Break the Silence and Project Manager of Open Secret. The management team have represented the service at different times depending on availability. Due to a request from survivors we employed a specific Project Manager for the service and we have since had positive feedback that this is the correct structure going forward.

Staffing issues. Staff walking out and other issues.

Only one member of staff has left ICSSS. She left on good terms to take another position. We have also successfully recruited volunteers, some of whom are now offering more volunteer hours than they originally offered.

No regular partner agency meetings.

Partner meetings have been ongoing since the start of the service apart from a brief period when the CEO of Open Secret was unwell. There was a meeting on 3rd September and there will be another meeting next week.

Given this is a national service communication is key.

I presume this refers to marketing and not the communication point above. ICSSS has exceeded its publicity budget substantially after listening to survivor's views that marketing was very important. We placed an advertisement on STV twice and on major radio stations. Development Workers regularly distribute publicity materials and give talks and presentations to publicise the service.

Cancelling of conference when venue and all other arrangements were in place.

The conference has not been cancelled; it has been postponed due to low numbers. Survivors have given feedback to development workers that it is a good idea to offer certificates of attendance for organisations attending to encourage attendance. Some survivors have also said that they are pleased to have a few more months to prepare themselves to attend as many have not attended groups before, and a conference would be very challenging. The venue and other arrangements still stand for the new date. We have taken on board feedback from survivors who have requested that they can bring travelling companions with them. It is important for the conference to be cost effective due to use of public funds and therefore we need to attract sufficient numbers able to pay for a place.

All of the above paints a picture of an organisation in disarray resulting in a service unable to meet the criteria required.

I refer to the points above all of which can be directly challenged. We are unable to understand how attempts to discredit a service that offers help to a large number of survivors can possibly strengthen the case of the petitioners. It, in fact, potentially affects the ability to meet the needs of hundreds of survivors. Any of the petitions committee members are welcome to visit the ICSSS and speak to service users to gain a more balanced view and development workers can describe the amount of work offered to meet the needs of service users.

Some of these issues were highlighted to the Scottish Government in 2009 by the petitioner.

The petitioners' letter was fully answered by ICSSS and the points raised were proven to be not valid. I will end with a survivor's voice that says it all:

WE SURVIVORS NEED A VOICE, WE NEED ANSWERS, AND WE NEED CLOSURE. IN-CARE SURVIVORS SERVICE PROVIDES SUPPORT AND LONG MAY IT CONTINUE.