

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." (Edmund Burke)

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE: A TRUE STORY. "Eight years ago, when I was only 10, I was taken out of school by police and made to take part in interviews about my mother and my step-dad. In my very first interview I said that "People have been spreading lies and saying horrible things". I was asked about a one-off home movie which had nudity in it, and I confirmed that it hadn't even been my mum or step-dad's idea, and that nobody had been 'made' to do it. I was asked whether my mum or step-dad would have shown the video to anyone else and I said, "No, they definitely haven't. I know they wouldn't even think of doing that". I was asked how I knew that and I said, "Because they're so old fogeyish and straight laced ...". At that time I was furious that anyone could believe they could do *anything* really bad.

"When I did that interview I was living with my aunt as my mum and step-dad had bail conditions meaning they couldn't have any contact with us. A month later, my [biological] dad took us away from our aunt. It was only after that, and after constant pressure from my step mum (dad's fourth wife), that I began to get 'memories' of sexual abuse.

"Although sometimes I feel that I must have *always* been able to remember these things, I'm sure I can actually remember when and where the very first 'memories' of abuse appeared in my mind. It was when I was sitting in my room, above the bar at dad and step-mum's pub, after I had been thinking about all the things that had been said by everyone about sex abuse, and I suddenly began to 'remember' things which I believed had happened to me. I can remember the pub quite well. My room was on the floor above the bar, and I knew the combination for the pub alarm, so I sometimes used to deactivate the alarm and help myself to drinks from the bar. I was only a kid, ten years old, and I thought it was pretty cool that I could help myself from the bar.

"We lived at the pub, with dad and step-mum, for about six months, so I'm almost positive that it was in that six-month period that my 'memories' of abuse first started. My dad and step-mum always denied that we were put under any pressure to make allegations, and everybody always believed them, but they were lying. The reality was that step-mum constantly got at us to 'remember' or 'talk about' more and more things, saying: "I know what's happened", "You have to tell me about it", etc. She was completely over the top.

"Dad and step-mum used to talk to each other about abuse all the time, where I could hear them. It didn't occur to me at the time, but I have sometimes wondered whether my step-mum was also trying to tinker with my mind while I was asleep - I remember a few times waking up in the night and finding her sitting next to my bed, or close to me in the room, as if she'd been talking to me while I was sleeping. Dad and step-mum were also constantly bad-mouthing my real mum and step-dad, and making allegations about them, which I now know were untrue. For example, they stopped us getting my mum's letters, and then told us that mum had stopped writing to us. They stopped us having our own things from our old house, and told us that mum and step-dad weren't letting us have our stuff. They did everything they could to make us hate mum and step-dad.

"First the 'memories' weren't as serious as they later became, but as the pressure went on, they got worse. By the time of the trial, I had made very serious allegations against my step-dad and was asked at the trial why I hadn't reported the abuse to my mum at the time. The answer I gave was that she wouldn't have believed me. I remember saying something like "she never used to believe us" (about other stuff) and "what's the point of having a mother you can't trust?" I was in tears.

"After the trial (step-dad got a five year sentence), pressure continued and I then began to remember abuse carried out by mum and step-dad *together*. I was sent off to do yet another interview, but the Police decided not to proceed with any action - something I am now very relieved about. After having had to live with my dad and step-mum for two years, I had gone from knowing that my real mum and step-dad were "old fogeyish and straight laced" and wouldn't do anything seriously wrong, and having no memory at all of having been abused myself, to believing they had both committed serious sexual abuse against me (and I still have vivid 'memories'). It seems incredible that nobody ever asked "if he first thought mum wouldn't have believed him, how can he now think she was there watching and even taking part?"

"It's only in more recent times that I have actually been able to see what my father put in the claims to the CICA [Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority], and have been able to confirm with one of my sisters that some of the things I 'remember' happening to *her* didn't happen at all.

"Things my dad put into my sister's claim simply never happened. I now have so many conflicting memories I no longer know what is true and what isn't. And it's really messed my head up. On one hand, it's hard to believe that my memories of abuse are false because they are so vivid. On the other hand, it's also hard to believe that they are true, because (a) I didn't have those 'memories' before I went to Dad and step-mum's pub, (b) my sister has confirmed that things I 'remember' about her didn't happen, and (c) there are so many *conflicting* memories. That conflict causes me a great deal of distress, as I can't comprehend how I can be so sure of two completely different sets of memories.

"My father claimed compensation for the alleged abuse against me and *went on to steal that money*."

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“However, the trauma I suffered as a result of the police interviews, being suddenly taken away from my real mum and step-dad, my pets, my friends, my school and my home, and constant pressure I was put under when I was only ten and eleven years old, and the memories, *whether they are real or false*, will affect the rest of my life - and no amount of money can compensate for that. As well as all the trauma of the memories themselves, I also have to live with the guilt over the consequences of what was put into my mind by the constant pressure I was subjected to. Now I just want to be able to get on with my life. I want to be able to reclaim all those lost years and rebuild my family relationships.

“My dad and step-mum both committed perjury in the Family Court case, which ended up with a ‘finding of fact’ against my real mum and step-dad in connection with the later allegations, which the police had decided not to proceed with. My sisters and I were put on a Care Order with Warwick Social Services. We continued living with my dad. Warwick Social Services brought in an ‘expert’ (Dr Bentovim) for the Family Court case, and he said in his report and under oath in the Court that children ‘don’t suffer from false memories’. What an irresponsible thing to say to a Court! How could he possibly *know*? I am living proof that ten-year-olds *can* suffer from false memories.

“My therapist at Warwick Social Services, although I am sure that he always meant well, didn’t think that my step-mum was ‘clever’ enough to generate false memories, which has made it very difficult for me to deal with having these conflicting memories and trying to be able to account for them.

“I think being given the opportunity to look into that possibility at a much earlier age would have been very helpful, but now after so much damage I don’t want any more ‘therapy’ from anyone; my step-mum claimed that what she was doing was ‘therapy’. Once she made me write a really nasty letter to my mum – saying that it was ‘for therapy’ and promised she was going to destroy it afterwards; she basically told me the sort of things to put in it, and actually wouldn’t let me leave the room until I’d written what she wanted. That note wasn’t destroyed – my dad handed it over to the police as ‘evidence’. It wasn’t actually *used* in Court, but both my dad and step-mum had *intended* that it should be used as ‘evidence’.

“My dad had previous convictions for theft, burglary and (most importantly) obtaining money by deception. The police knew this - but they never let my mum and step-dad have that information. It might have made such a difference if they had. My mum kept telling everyone - police, the Warwick Social Workers, etc., that we were all being emotionally abused by my step-mum, but no-one would ever listen to her. I wish they had - it would have saved us from years of problems. When I look at the things that Social Workers call ‘emotional abuse’ when it fits *their* side of the story and *their* goals, it really sickens me that they flatly refused to consider it in this case, and never lifted a finger to protect us from years of really emotionally damaging brainwashing. What they did *wasn’t* done ‘in the interests of us children’ - it was done in the interests of not undermining the prosecution case.

“I’m trying now to set the record straight, and get the wrongs undone. The problem is, I know how this sort of case is looked at. I know how the CCRC look at things. I just really hope they’re not stupid enough to make some comment like “Ah, but it doesn’t *disprove* the allegations,” and refuse to recommend an appeal. If I now can’t even tell, *myself*, what happened and what didn’t, then *nobody else* (including a jury, the CCRC, or appeal judges) can make that decision.”

SYSTEM ABUSE: THE ‘I’M GOING TO HIT YOU UNTIL YOU STOP SCREAMING’ PLOT
Some years ago, Vanessa (a partially-sighted woman) had two young boys (B and M), both of whom were born with a congenital eye defect, and had to have eye operations within the first few weeks of life. M had weeks of intense pain, causing major stress for Vanessa as he was wrongly diagnosed with ‘colic’ several times, before a hernia he had been born with was *correctly* diagnosed, meaning yet another operation.

The boys had to wear contact lenses, which partially-sighted Vanessa couldn’t put in or take out, so this had to be done by local district nurses. Warwick Social Services became involved with the family.

One day B struggled and wriggled (as usual) when the nurses were dealing with his contact lenses. This resulted in B having fingertip bruising around his eyes. The Friday of that week Vanessa was taken to the police station and questioned about the bruises.

She explained to them that the bruises had not been caused by her, as it wasn’t she who dealt with the contact lenses. A Child Protection Case Conference followed. Neither B nor M was placed on the ‘At Risk’ register, but Vanessa’s faith in ‘the system’ took a severe blow.

Around two months after that Case Conference, Vanessa met Martin Brookes, whom she married 18 months later. The following spring, sight-impaired toddler B broke his leg by falling off a chair while Vanessa was preparing lunch. While B was in hospital, a scan on Vanessa’s new pregnancy showed that there was no baby, just an empty amniotic sac which meant that now Vanessa needed an operation, too. Complications followed the surgery, and Vanessa’s emotional state deteriorated under the continued stress. Maybe the authorities were so focused on the boys’ health issues that they ignored Vanessa’s symptoms. Instead of being correctly diagnosed and treated, she was judged as ‘aggressive’, ‘unco-operative’, and so forth.

Only a few months later sight-impaired B bumped his head at nursery school, resulting in a bruise. Vanessa says: “We were falsely accused of inflicting it. B had told us and my mum *himself* that *while he was at nursery* he had fallen over bumping his head. I was asked to sign the accident book at the nursery and was led to believe that I had signed it to say that the accident, and how he had got the bruise, had happened at the nursery school. The facts were then ‘twisted’ to say that I was signing the accident book to say that he got the bruise at home. Social Services came out with a GP and the health visitor from the doctor’s surgery because the nursery had told them that the accident had happened at home.”

In 2001 Vanessa gave birth to a baby daughter, C. They moved house, only to come up against more problems. Vanessa says: “Things got worse. C kept gaining weight and losing it. I thought that the health visitor was attacking me so therefore I would shout at her. In June 2001 Martin asked for help from Social Services because he was concerned about my mood changes and my crying spells. I was crying for no particular reason.” There were altercations with Social Workers, and Vanessa had some help from counseling. She says: “I started to attend appointments to see a psychologist. While I was having counselling things improved substantially at home.

“Eight months after the counselling started I was discharged, and a few months after I had given birth to my new son (baby A) things had started up again. In Court, Social Services were saying that I needed to change, and that any changes that I had made were not sustained. The change was not sustained because I was discharged from counselling far too prematurely.” Vanessa’s family began to get harassment from neighbours again, who didn’t understand M’s tapping on the wall to find his way about (known as ‘squaring off’ in the sight-impaired world), and interpreted it as abuse. The neighbours taunted B and M about their disability. A total of 16 incidents of harassment against Vanessa’s family were recorded by the local police, and the children of the other family were cautioned.

Vanessa says: “In July 2003 a ‘voluntary working agreement’ was drawn up and handed for us to sign. I was upset about how this agreement had been worded; it had read that we had been emotionally abusing our children and we have done no such thing! I had asked for the word ‘abuse’ to be taken out and for the statement to be reworded better before I would agree to sign it. If I am not allowed to express an opinion without being accused of being abusive then there is a problem! In July 2003 we went to Alton Towers for the day. Social Services phoned my husband while we were there. We were stood next to a roller coaster at the time, where members of the public were screaming and shouting while they were on the rides. Social Services made a trumped up allegation that it was *me* screaming at the children, and also claimed that the children were out of control also screaming and shouting.”

In August 2003 B and M were placed in foster care, and Vanessa and Martin temporarily split up, with C and baby A living with Martin.

Relationships with Warwick Social Services deteriorated. Vanessa says: “In September 2003 I was asked to sign a working agreement. This agreement stated that I was to have no contact with my husband either via text, letter, face to face contact, telephone or e-mail. ...We felt we were working under extreme oppression because if we did not agree with them we would feel that an allegation would be trumped up to say that we were not co operating with them, and felt that they would use the most pettiest of things against us in Court.”

Daughter C and baby A were taken into care, the reason given being that Martin ‘wasn’t coping well with the split-up’. Each time that Vanessa and Martin expressed an objection to Social Services’ actions, it was held against them.

Social Services asked Vanessa to move out so Martin could get the children back again. She moved to Huddersfield in October 2003, while Martin and the children remained in the Warwick Social Services area. As events transpired, however, he never got the children back. Social Services said that he was ‘too enmeshed with Vanessa to look after them’.

A psychiatrist to whom Vanessa was referred diagnosed her as suffering from a narcissistic personality disorder. Vanessa feels that much of the ‘data’ on which this diagnosis was made actually came from Social Services’ distorted records. The psychiatrist apparently failed to consider the differential diagnosis of Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. CPTSD can arise from any prolonged period of negative stress in which certain factors are present, which include betrayal, bewilderment, loss of control and disempowerment. There has recently been a trend amongst some psychiatric professionals to label people suffering CPTSD as exhibiting a personality disorder. Common symptoms of CPTSD include: hypervigilance (which feels like but is not paranoia), irritability, sudden angry or violent outbursts, nightmares, reactive depression, nervousness, anxiety, irrational or impulsive behaviour, low self-esteem, an overwhelming sense of injustice and a strong desire to do something about it.

From April 2004, Vanessa and Martin began to re-build their relationship, but in July 2004 Social Services started taking steps to ‘free C and A for adoption’. (C and A were originally taken into care ostensibly because Martin couldn’t cope with the split-up). Again (and understandably!) Vanessa was most upset by this and expressed those views. She says: “My children are maybe being adopted out and I get accused of being abusive. I am fed up with being accused of being abusive when I want to say something which varies to their [Social Services’] views. We had an ‘independent social work assessment’ with C and A. I was very nervous about the assessment and wanted to do my best; I felt under pressure and panicky.” The social worker did this ‘assessment’ during contact meetings.

“I felt I could not fully trust her because she was a Social Worker. The assessment came back positive and said that we could care for C and A as a couple. There was an experts meeting just before the Court hearing. I did not fully understand what this meeting was for but at this meeting things went wrong. The Social Worker listened to all the rubbish that these doctors were spouting and this resulted in her back pedalling and saying that we could not care for C and A.” Few people take into account the emotional effects of Social Services’ ‘involvement’ when assessing people’s emotional responses. Failing to do this, and then demanding ‘improvement’, is as crazy as saying “We’re going to torture you until you stop screaming. And then we’re going to do it some more until you start again – at which point we’re going to hold it against you.” The Court hearing found in Social Services’ favour, and C and A were ‘freed for adoption’. Vanessa continues: “We went to the High Court but our appeal was turned down even though *we proved that the local authority had falsified evidence in their reports*, the psychiatrist’s diagnosis of me having a narcissistic personality was found to be unsafe, and the MMPI2 questionnaire used by the psychiatrist was unreliable for diagnosing personality disorders, but because I didn’t have a another expert witness of my own to undermine the psychiatric report, his diagnosis stood. The judge also couldn’t fully understand the case as the original judgment had been *lost* by the lower court. The children are now adopted. I am now taking my case to the European Court of Human Rights; something has to be done to stop the Social Services carrying on like this.” Vanessa and Martin moved into the Calderdale Social Services area in February 2005, and had no involvement with them until Vanessa became pregnant again. Vanessa’s new baby is expected soon. Calderdale Social Services, on the input of Warwick Social Services, are planning to remove the baby within days of birth, *despite their own admission that neither Vanessa nor Martin pose any immediate risk to the unborn baby*. People worldwide are aware of and outraged by this. This is one of the worst types of false accusation – that you *might at some point in the future pose a risk*. How can anyone disprove an accusation that something *might* happen? What is needed is support, support and more support, combined with the treatment that Vanessa is now (finally!) receiving.

Child Protection agencies are *supposed* to work in partnership, not only with each other, but *also with families*. Children are *supposed* to be removed *only as a last resort where all else has failed*. In respect of the unborn baby, nothing has failed, because nothing has yet been tried. Social Services need to start working *genuinely* in the interests of *children within families* – and not take actions which lead people to believe they are working in the interests of achieving adoption targets.

PLEASE SIGN SAFARI'S ePETITION for remedies against the abuse of power by those in authority!

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/>

followed byAbuseOfPower

JOHN HEMMING MP claims to have details of 90 cases where mistakes were made in Family Courts, whose hearings are held behind closed doors. He is launching a legal bid to lift the secrecy surrounding children taken from parents and put up for adoption.

NORMAN LAMB MP has called for an end to Government adoption targets that 'provide a perverse incentive' with Local Authorities winning cash rewards if a specified number of children are adopted. Not everyone is honest. Industry has known for decades that, if you pay on 'piecework', one result is that you get a lot of very shoddy pieces.

THE INDEPENDENT POLICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION (IPCC) is to examine the conduct of Northamptonshire Police officers after a complaint by Warren Blackwell, who won his appeal against conviction on 7th October 1999 for alleged sexual offences. He is furious about the manner in which the officers assisted in the conviction of an innocent man. New evidence revealed that the woman who accused him had made "strikingly similar allegations" about other sex attacks to forces around the country, and the police would have been aware of this.

IPCC Commissioner Amerdeep Somal said: "The original police investigation which resulted in Mr Blackwell's conviction and the subsequent quashing of his conviction have attracted considerable publicity. I am satisfied allegations made by Mr Blackwell are matters of public concern that require an independent investigation." Full details of Mr Blackwell's complaint will not become available until the investigation is concluded.

POLICE OFFICER DC PETER COOPER has been found guilty of sexually assaulting a 14-year-old boy. Cooper has been a West Midlands officer for 32 years and was assigned to the Family Protection Unit, investigating child abuse cases, between 2002 and 2005. The allegations against him were made in 2005. Amazingly, a spokesman for the force said that it did not plan to review cases in which Cooper had been involved during that period, nor to alert families with whom he may have had contact. Which is why SAFARI is doing so now. The force argued that it was unnecessary to review his work as a Child Protection Officer, because he spent most of his time interviewing suspects and would not have been alone with vulnerable children ... but that is not the point; if Cooper is indeed guilty (and we must always remember he may also have been falsely accused) then it seems clear that anyone who has been convicted of alleged paedophilic offences, as a result of his evidence, may have grounds for appeal as his judgement in matters of this sort would appear to have been seriously flawed. No right-minded juror would accept that a paedophile could be *objective* when interviewing someone else also accused of being a paedophile.

A 13-YEAR-OLD GIRL has admitted falsely accusing a 17-year-old youth of rape. She originally claimed that the youth approached her after she got off a bus and forced her into a wooded area in the park. Officers released a CCTV picture of a boy they wanted to interview. A police spokesman said: "Following a media appeal, a 17-year-old boy saw his photograph and voluntarily came forward to assist police. The 13-year-old girl has since admitted that she was not raped." It is not thought the girl will face charges of wasting police time.

EDWARD CALEY-KNOWLES, who won his appeal against conviction, has been told he won't receive *any* compensation as the "conviction was quashed due to legal misdirection in the case, not due to a newly-discovered fact". We've seen this rule before and it is outrageous. The idea that a wrongly convicted person is not entitled to compensation because it was the JUDGE who made an error is contemptible. SAFARI's view is that, if the Government wish to do this, they need to open the doors for *judges themselves* to be sued by the person wrongfully convicted, if they were responsible for that wrongful conviction.

A SAFARI reader from HMP Dovegate has confirmed that they had the Sex Offenders' Treatment Programme *removed* from their Sentence Plan as it was deemed 'unrealistic and unattainable' for someone who maintained their innocence. Eureka!

"FRACTURED FAMILIES" (ISBN-10: 0955518407). This excellent book, published by the British False Memory Society, contains the stories of some of those who have been falsely accused of abuse as a result of false memories, and the stories of some who have had false memories inflicted upon them, and have later had to come to terms with the tragic consequences. It should be compulsory reading for social workers, Judges, police officers, psychologists, psychiatrists and therapists, and everyone involved in alleged abuse cases - no matter how old or how recent the events. Buy it, or order it from your library. As our lead story shows, children as young as ten can have false memories inflicted on them.

SAFARI e-PETITIONS: Please get everyone you know with Internet access to sign our latest on-line Government ePetition to allow inmates of HM Prisons to sign ePetitions to Government in an effort to rehabilitate genuine offenders and reduce the injustice to those wrongly imprisoned following false accusations. We need at least 200 signatures on *each* of our petitions to get a Government response. Please visit:

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/>

followed by.....Letprisonerssign (Also please sign.....AbuseOfPower)

[Our ePetition links are on our website]

Thanks to Terry McCarthy (Parole Board for England and Wales) for statistics of those granted release on Parole despite maintaining innocence.			
Figures for month of July 2007			
<i>Non-lifers:</i>			
All offences	13	of 63	20.6%
Rape	4	of 28	14.3%
Indecent Assault	2	of 10	20.0%
Other Sex	1	of 3	33.3%
Violence	0	of 6	0.0%
Property	1	of 4	25.0%
Drugs	2	of 5	40.0%
Others	3	of 7	42.9%
Total Sex	7	of 41	17.1%
Total Non Sex	6	of 22	27.3%
<i>Lifers only</i>	0	of 0	n/a
[No lifer cases considered this month]			