



Betrayed By Their Trust

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Sarah Dugan

Chief Executive

Worcs Health & Care NHS Trust

Isaac Maddox House

29th February 2016

Dear Ms Dugan,

Mr Collman – A Matter for Resignation

Justice requires that Clare Wills and Susan Blackman have their names cleared.

Three times Stephen Collman has failed to make sure there is an investigation into the cause of serious head injuries sustained by a patient, Ann Lomax, in October 2009. Instead, he has been content to allow the scapegoating of staff members, Clare Wills and Susan Blackman, to endure for six years. Their hopes for justice in the recent inquiry were cruelly dashed because Mr Collman, or those acting on his behalf, succeeded in making sure that the cause of Ann Lomax's injuries was deemed to lie outside its scope.

This is enough to warrant his resignation.

Because of his negligence, the possibility that a vulnerable woman with a mental illness may have suffered a violent attack while on home leave has not been investigated, nor has the possibility that she injured herself. Because of his negligence, a financial fraud may have been perpetrated against the NHS by the award of compensation to Mr and Mrs Lomax even before the completion of disciplinary action against Clare and Sue.

Furthermore, Mr Collman, or those acting on his behalf, misled the inquiry concerning the conflict of interest regarding the personal relationship widely understood to have existed between him and Vanya Woods, Clare and Susan's Team Manager. Mr Collman and Ms Woods together made the initial decision to ignore the serious head injuries of Ann Lomax.

This is more than enough to warrant his resignation.

First, in October 2009 Ann Lomax caused an incident on Harvington Ward whereby she sustained a graze on her forehead. Clare and Susan were on duty. The minor

nature of her injury was noted by another staff member and a patient. Her husband collected her and took her home. He returned with her the following morning, by which time Ann Lomax was displaying much more serious head injuries including bruising around the eyes. The increased severity of the injuries from that of the day before was noted by another member of staff and by a patient. Ms Woods observed these serious injuries, and she contacted Mr Collman. Ann Lomax was a vulnerable person, and they had a duty to instigate a safeguarding investigation to identify the cause of the injuries. There was an obvious possibility that the injuries occurred when the patient was away from the ward with her husband, and the police should have been informed. Mr Collman and Ms Woods did nothing. Instead, Mr Lomax put in a written complaint later in the month claiming the injuries occurred on the ward. He had the services of a solicitor and was a barrister himself. The Trust appears to have set in hand compensation prior to the disciplinary action taken against Clare and Susan. Mr Collman presided over this disciplinary action and he failed to declare a conflict of interest because of any relationship with Ms Woods. The investigation was carried out by his junior manager, Darren Levett, and was biased and poorly handled. Susan was sacked in March 2010 and Clare was sacked in April 2010.

The bias and incompetence of Mr Levett's investigation was at least recognised by the inquiry in 2015. This recognition was followed by no action, and it clearly falls very short of the clearing of the names of two members of staff who have endured this slur against their characters now for over six years.

In 2012 Mr Collman had his first chance to correct the injustice. This came about because the Trust attempted to deepen the damage inflicted upon Clare. Having sacked her, they referred her to the NMC questioning her fitness to practise. The NMC commissioned a legal report from the London solicitors Field Fisher Waterhouse dated August 2011. This regarded Susan Blackman's statement as particularly useful, and found that Mr Lomax had many questions to answer. It observed that the photographs of Ann Lomax's injuries suggested that they could not have been caused in the manner alleged on the ward. The outcome in February 2012 was a decision that Clare had no case to answer. It appears that the Trust completely failed to respond. Clare and Susan were not contacted by Mr Collman with any kind of apology, nor was Mr Lomax required to answer the questions raised by Field Fisher Waterhouse.

Mr Collman had his third opportunity to do justice for Clare and Susan in 2015, when they were two of the five cases investigated by the inquiry under the Trust Development Authority. This turned out to be a waste of their time because inexplicably the investigator treated Ann Lomax's injuries simply as a "clinical incident". That is to say the possibility that the injuries occurred off the ward was not considered. Mr Collman, or someone acting on his behalf, ensured that this view prevailed. Furthermore, the inquiry was misled concerning the question about his relationship with Ms Woods. The report stated that this had all been based on gossip from an unknown source. In fact, the source had not been "gossip". The source was known and it was Ms Woods herself. She had freely spoken about it to many colleagues. Needless to say, she was not interviewed for the inquiry.

There is much more to be said about Mr Collman. There are three other ruined nurses who had the right to expect him to offer an apology or otherwise set their minds at

rest, but he failed them all. There is a member of the public who has similarly been left without recognition of the abuse she has suffered. The time is not right to say anything about these cases, as they still have a way to go. But that time will come.

This repeated refusal of Mr Collman to do anything to end the misery inflicted on Clare and Susan is shameful. If there is no appropriate response to this letter, then we will begin to take the matter to those who may have some influence.

This letter has been sent also to Mr Burdon.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Gilbert Chair, BBTT
Ingra Kirkland Secretary BBTT
Susan Blackman Assistant Secretary BBTT

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