

The Whistle

FREEDOM TO CARE

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Promoting public accountability - Protecting freedom of speech in the workplace

Jail for MI5 Whistleblower

Former British Secret Service agent (MI5 officer) **David Shayler** has over the last five years blown the whistle on the unaccountable behaviour of the intelligence services. This November Mr Shayler was sentenced to six months in prison under the Official Secrets Act.

Freedom to Care considers this completely unjust. David Shayler drew attention to malpractice, incompetence and probably criminal behaviour within an arm of government that *especially* needs to be kept accountable.

In his trial Mr Shayler could not even put his case fully because of the use of Public Interest Immunity certificates.

Freedom to Care agrees with *Liberty* (the UK civil liberties campaign) that the UK's Official Secrets Act urgently needs review. For example, people working within the intelligence agencies should be able to provide a *public interest defence* for blowing the whistle on serious concerns. At the moment the Act does not allow for a public interest defence.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) does not protect police officers and intelligence officers.

Freedom to Care maintains that this situation is completely contrary to the public accountability of government. Security and intelligence services which are a law unto themselves are a serious risk to freedom in any society and must be accountable before the law and before Parliament.

'Liberty' Publication

'Secrets, Spies & Whistleblowers',
2000, Liberty, 64 pages, £5. Has
recommendations for legal reform.

From: Liberty, 21 Tabard Street,
London SE1 4LA. Tel: 020 7403 3888

NHS WHISTLEBLOWING CONTINUES

Alison Gammon, the doctor in charge of Stoke Mandeville Hospital's Accident and Emergency department, became ill after receiving threatening phone calls and letters because she raised concerns about the competence of a medical colleague going back to the late 1990s. In January 2002 an employment tribunal concluded that Gammon had been treated badly by management, which had not conducted a proper inquiry. Gammon refused compensation, saying: "All I wanted was a fair hearing".

While civil servants were sent by the government to investigate the hospital's long waiting lists, the management went on employing the unsafe doctor, despite complaints from many staff. Because of the management's inability to behave in an open and accountable fashion, the reputation of the hospital now lies in ruins.

Conscientious professional, Alison Gammon, has said there are important lessons for the NHS: 'Until we can develop a truly non-punitive culture, in which people can have the confidence to raise their concerns, there will continue to be a failure properly to identify, manage and resolve clinical risk.' (See 'The Observer', 27-01-02).

In May 2002 it was reported that another NHS whistleblowing doctor had won a dismissal case. Dr **Feyi Awotona**, a consultant in obstetrics and gynaecology, was dismissed when she raised concerns about the high infant death rate and poor treatment of female patients at South Tyneside Hospital. The tribunal said her dismissal was "irredeemably tainted by unlawful victimisation". Instead of investigating Dr Awotona's public-spirited concerns, hospital managers set up a "kangaroo court" in order to oust her from her post as head of the hospital's labour ward.

Gammon refused an offer of £85,000 to drop her case, because she was determined to protect her freedom of speech on behalf of the public. (See 'The Guardian', May 14, 2002)

Freedom to Care members: Are we 'good' citizens?

Article based on Robert McGregor's talk at 9th AGM (23-11-02). Robert is FtC's company secretary and publicity officer.

How, if at all, does being a *Freedom to Care* member fit with the current notions of being a 'good' citizen? What, in fact, does it mean to be a 'good' citizen? And can one be 'good' in different ways or is it one size fits all?

An answer to, at least, the last question can be found in the following quote:

*'As citizenship is about human relations, it defies a simple, static definition that can be applied to all societies at all times. Instead, the idea of citizenship is inherently contested and contingent, always reflecting the particular set of relationships and types of governance found within any given society.'*¹

So, you can't talk meaningfully about citizenship without considering the issue of governance.

In the UK, a form of governance increasingly being adopted is variously described as network² or citizen-centred.³ Part of the impetus derives from the inescapable evidence that our system of representative democracy is failing in many important respects⁴ and from the widespread perception that the State itself is also in crisis.

In network or citizen-centred governance, the traditional decision makers (whether at central, regional or local government level and otherwise in whatever part of the public sector) involve lay people in the decision making process. Typically, the involvement is in the form of consultation, rather than an actual sharing of decision-making power. For examples of 'case studies of innovative and good practice in public participation, best practice guidelines and other consultation web sites' go to: <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/2001/consultation/bestpractice/index.htm>.

As the State increasingly comes to recognise that it might in principle have, in certain situations, to share decision making power and responsibility with citizens, so civil society has become a specific object of government policy, as has the notion of what it means to be a 'good' citizen.

Civil society is the public space (still largely unregulated) that exists in between the State and the market.

"In its most general usage, civil society would refer to all voluntarily constituted social relations, institutions, and organisations that are not

*reducible to the administrative grasp of the state.'*⁵

The definitions of 'civil society' are many and various, but for me its defining (and most precious) characteristic is that it is not 'reducible to the administrative grasp of the state.'

At present, there is a compact (1998) between the State and civil society which contains a set of principles (e.g. 'Independent and diverse voluntary and community sector is fundamental to the well-being of society' and a set of undertakings: e.g. on the part of the government: 'To recognise and support the voluntary sector's independence' and on the part of the voluntary sector: 'To maintain high standards of governance and accountability').

However, as the process continues of co-opting civil society (and individual citizens) into participating in public policy issues (including policy development; service provision and monitoring of standards), then inevitably civil society will become subject to increased regulation.

In addition to the increased regulation of civil society, a further means of control is to promulgate a particular conception of what it means to be a 'good' citizen.

Clearly, the most effective way in which notions of citizenship can be established in society is through education and in the UK the official model of State approved citizenship is now being taught as part of the national curriculum.

In developing its ideas about citizenship as a group based, cooperative, community building obligation (and its Third Way 'philosophy' generally), New Labour has been heavily influenced by communitarianism – a social movement originating in the US, the 'core mission' of which is 'to revitalise morality through the restoration of community.'⁶

Communitarianism has much to recommend it, but without proper democratic safeguards, it can lead to the oppression of minorities and anyone who dares to dissent from the group sanctioned world view.

As far as I can see, there is no reference or guidance in the citizenship curriculum to the individual acting on his or her own against the group – e.g. as in the case of a whistleblower.

The only indication I've been able to find anywhere that individuals might have to act on their own in the face of external pressure is contained in guidance on a related part of the national curriculum – PSHE Programme of Study – Key Stage 4, which includes the following: "para 2) b) People should be taught to use assertiveness skills to resist unhelpful pressure".

(See: <http://www.nc.uk.net/nc/contents/PSHE-4--POS.html>)

However this guidance doesn't relate specifically to citizenship, although presumably the skill involved would be transferable in practice.

The Citizenship curriculum assumes that there is a fixed body of knowledge about what citizenship means. But is there? Not everyone would agree:

'School subjects traditionally draw upon the resources of well established bodies of knowledge, but where are such bodies of knowledge in the subject of Citizenship?'

What is needed is a complementary model of what it means to be a 'good' citizen – one which endorses the role of the individual acting on his or her own conscience, even where that involves becoming alienated from the group or community.

Another example of a major, state-sponsored initiative involving a conception of group oriented citizenship is the patient and public involvement system for the NHS. Space doesn't permit a review of what's currently being implemented and developed. Suffice to say that I believe there are definite indications that the system is being designed to promote consensus by minimising as far as possible any scope for dissent or disagreement.

The concern is that as we move increasingly towards a citizen based system of governance (i.e. one in which lay people are involved in decisions regarding public policy development and implementation, alongside the traditional decision makers: the State, the market and other experts) the State will seek to exercise control through indirect means. Perhaps most insidiously through the promotion of a conception of citizenship which teaches that to be a 'good' citizen, one's thinking must always be oriented to the good of the group.

I don't believe that this is a conception of citizenship which fits Freedom to Care members, if only because supporting whistleblowers, to a greater or lesser extent, must necessarily involve supporting someone who is putting themselves in opposition to a group sanctioned way of thinking.

So is there a more apt conception of citizenship? One with which Freedom to Care members may be able to identify themselves more readily? I think there is:

'... [t]he duty of the "Socratic" citizen consists in paying critical attention to the moral consequences of the actions, policies and beliefs of his or her political community and fellow citizens. Where these depart from the claims of morality or procedural fairness, the thinking

citizen will point this out, ignoring the immediate consequences for him – or herself.'

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Medical Secretary Speaks Out

Irene Mounsey, a medical secretary who raised concerns about standards in a breast cancer unit at Bradford Hospitals NHS Trust was victimised by managers and driven to resign, an employment tribunal heard in August 2002. Earlier, a doctor (a cancer specialist) had been dismissed after raising similar worries about the treatment of 168 women, but won a tribunal case for unfair dismissal earlier this year. The trust's director of human resources also lost his job after complaining about the way the complaints were handled. Ms Mounsey told the hearing in Leeds that a bullying situation arose after a critical report on the city's breast cancer service. A consultant, Robert Phipps, had been appointed as a result and Ms Mounsey was his personal assistant. But his life had been made difficult from the start, she said, and then she too was intimidated.

[See: Martin Wainwright's report in 'The Guardian' of Tuesday August 13, 2002.]

PUBLIC SERVICES IN WALES A Crisis of Public Accountability

Chris Clode

There is a crisis in public services in Wales. An Audit Commission Review in July of all public services in the Principality found social services provision "worrying". Six out of eight councils jointly reviewed were "struggling" with prospects "judged as less than promising". From North Wales to South Wales, the protection of children and vulnerable adults by Local Authorities and Health Trusts is coming increasingly under scrutiny as more whistleblowers emerge. FtC has long been involved in supporting whistleblower Andy Sutton in North Wales. Now child abuse whistleblowers Charles Faber and Neil White in Cardiff Social Services, South Wales, have both been sacked for refusing to be intimidated into silence.

Freedom to Care has been supporting one whistleblower who has been blowing the whistle on serious allegations of abuse involving professionals in the Cardiff area. As a result of his evidence, already a nurse has been disciplined and dismissed. Other evidence supports allegations that staff in the voluntary sector are having sexual relationships with children and then denying information to parents about their whereabouts. People openly admitting they are involved with rent boys and drugs in the city and with child prostitution links in Central Europe have been mixing with staff in one unit for vulnerable young people. Evidence shows that there has been an acceptance at managerial level that "plenty of people have relationships with patients".

FtC members have supported this particular whistleblower (who currently prefers to remain anonymous) in meetings with the Children's Commissioner in Wales and child protection agencies and have been assisting him in preparing an *affadavit* of his extensive evidence. In a recent letter from Welsh Assembly Minister, Jane Hutt, in 'Community Care' magazine, she claimed "my commitment is to ensure that we ... raise standards across all aspects of social care and health in Wales." Perhaps she could start by ensuring that whistleblowers against abuses within social care are not harassed, bullied and sacked, but are listened to by her and her Assembly colleagues.

FtC has been writing to her and Rhodri Morgan, First Minister in Wales for over four years about abuses across Wales and she has to take responsibility for their inaction.

National Health Service & Democracy Sheila Porter-Williams

I have been concerned for many years with helping make sure that the Health Service is made democratically accountable to the people that it serves at a local level. I have what seems to be a success story in Wales. In 1999 I wrote to the newly elected Assembly Members highlighting the lack of democratic accountability in the Health Service and suggesting that they should stretch to the limit their devolved powers and establish a network of democratically elected health authorities. Now, one of the Bills in the Queen's Speech is to establish twenty two democratically elected health authorities in Wales, sharing boundaries with the existing local authorities.

We will need to watch the legislation to check that the governance of the health authorities really will be democratic. Then the test will be in how many of the 22 areas democratic accountability will make a practical difference to service users.

Meanwhile in England we will have to make do with a divisive system of Foundation Hospitals. Any democracy in the Health Service will at best be patchy. The traditional management style of the Health Service across the country still often relies on intimidation, bullying and the suspension of whistleblowers and seems to be nearly as bad as the worst in local government and not accountable to anybody.

ANDY SUTTON WINS TRIBUNAL CASE

In July 2002 whistleblowing auditor (Flintshire) Andy Sutton won his case against Flintshire council at an Employment Tribunal. The Tribunal UNANIMOUSLY decided that he was a Whistleblower, as per the Public Interest Disclosure Act, and that he was Constructively Dismissed by Flintshire County Council. They have also linked the Dismissal to the Whistleblowing, it being the consequence of the investigations into malpractice he was being blocked from carrying out. Flintshire council is now appealing, and Freedom to Care continues to support Andy. For full details, including his damning 'Public Interest Report' go to Freedom to Care's website now.

Visit our website – over 250 pages!
<http://www.freedomtocare.org>

PUBLIC SERVICES IN WALES -2

Standards in Public Life?

Chris Clode

*Text of address of FtC National Coordinator,
Chris Clode, to 9th AGM, London (23-11-02)*

There has been much attention on the FtC website to Flintshire this year, because the problems there have been an ethical touchstone for the UK. It is now five years since the Nolan Report, "Standards in Public Life" and five years since the New Labour Government made its commitment to "open government". It is time to review progress with these commitments.

Have we already forgotten the *Seven Principles of Public Life* from Lord Nolan: **Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership**. In a 1998 article Tony Blair wrote, "Corruption must be banished from rotten boroughs". He said he would not accept "poor behaviour and corruption" in local government and that "today I will be setting out how we intend to crack down on council corruption. We will bring forward proposals, based on Lord Nolan's report, for a new framework of standards for local authorities ... all serious allegations of malpractice will be investigated - promptly, thoroughly and independently. And the findings of any investigation will be implemented."

Flintshire's miserable ethical performance has not been alone among Public Bodies. FtC has been working with whistleblowers in Coventry, Somerset, Ealing, Suffolk, Wrexham, Cardiff and Swansea, as well as DEFRA (the governments' agriculture department). Flintshire, we believe, is a touchstone for the state of public conduct five years on.

The story of Flintshire predates the whistleblowing by Andy Sutton, their own Head of Internal Audit. From when it was created in the Local Government Reorganisation in 1996, there were concerns about abuse of children and elderly in Flintshire's care. Those raising concerns lost their jobs. Ten staff witnesses went to the Waterhouse Tribunal investigation into child abuse with criticisms of the council and all lost their jobs following harassment, sickness and constructive dismissal. Sutton arrived in Flintshire in 1997 and immediately identified concerns; three examples were:

- The purchase of a farm using forged documents to get Welsh Office money to support a development scheme that collapsed, costing the County £600,000.

- Re-employing a manager for an old people's home and forging documents to cover the wrongful granting of £22,000 to her;
- Huge and dubious overtime payments paid to an administrator who was alleged to have been involved in withholding files from Waterhouse - and was now threatening to tell all. (further details on these and other Sutton evidence: www.freedomtocare.org).

What were the reactions to Sutton's inquiries?

- The County Solicitor sought legal opinions to limit Sutton's powers to demand documents;
- Disciplinary proceedings for which Sutton was the chief witness were held when he was on leave;
- UNISON supported members saying Sutton was harassing them;
- The head of the Fraud Squad visited witnesses to Sutton's investigations, telling them that the N. Wales Police would not be investigating the cases;
- District Audit was moderately critical of Flintshire - but selective, not reporting on the Waterhouse administrator, as promised.

The result was the familiar pattern of whistleblower harassment: Sutton was isolated, went off sick, but had to battle over the denial of sick pay rights- already granted to some COs who went off sick following his investigations! Finally, he was constructively dismissed, went to an Employment Tribunal this January, **won unanimously on all points** and awaits the results of Flintshire's Appeal next January (2003).

FtC has demanded the suspension of the COs named in the Employment Tribunal Report, fearing more disappearance of files. Both Welsh Assembly and Central Government say they cannot intervene - as it would undermine local democracy! It is up to local authorities to manage themselves - when the Leader of this heavily Labour majority Council had the investigation into his own malpractices taken out of Sutton's hands and smoothed away by the then Head of Finance. There was then no Elected Member Audit Committee; there is now and one of its first actions was to propose harsher penalties for "malicious whistleblowers"!

From his experience, Sutton draws parallels with the global crisis in auditing (Cf. Enron and Andersen.) He says that being managed by COs that he may have to investigate, taints the independence of Internal Auditors. They should not be employed by a local authority and should always report to a properly constituted Audit Committee.

.....continued page 6

What then is the current Flintshire situation?

- The old Head of Fraud Squad suddenly took early retirement when FtC called for an external Police Force investigation into his cases and published evidence on the Internet.
- The Fraud Squad Head is investigating matters, but FtC is keeping a sceptical watch; the Prime Minister's Office recently replied to a letter sent about Flintshire by FtC. It read, "Mr Blair has taken careful note of the contents." Yes? And?

Dignity at Work Bill

Freedom to Care has given it support to the campaign for a Dignity at Work Act. The Amicus (previously MSF union) Campaign Against Bullying at Work and Valerie Davey MP held a meeting with Members of Parliament on Monday 5th November Amicus. This was attended by about 100 people including Tim Field and Andy Thomas (a past and present director of FtC).

The Dignity at Work Bill provides for a right of dignity at work for employees; freedom from bullying, harassment, victimisation, discrimination, intimidation, unjustified criticism, and distress, such as is often suffered by whistleblowers.

The Dignity at Work Bill was put together by the MSF Union in 1997. Lord Monkswell steered the Bill through the House of Lords in December 1997 and January 1998. Attempts to introduce the Bill into the House of Commons was blocked by John Major's Conservative government in February 1997. Shortly afterwards a general election was announced and the Dignity at Work Bill was put on hold. The Bill started its progress again through the House of Lords in December 2001 under the guidance of Baroness Ann Gibson.

The first two sections of The Bill read as follows:

1. Right to dignity at work

1. (1) Every employee shall have a right to dignity at work and if the terms of the contract under which a person is employed do not include that right they shall be deemed to include it. (2) Subject to section 5 of this Act, an employer commits a breach of the right to dignity at work of an employee if that employee suffers during his employment with the employer harassment or bullying or any act, omission or conduct which causes him to be alarmed or distressed including

but not limited to any of the following - (a) behaviour on more than one occasion which is offensive, abusive, malicious, insulting or intimidating; (b) unjustified criticism on more than one occasion; (c) punishment imposed without reasonable justification, or (d) changes in the duties or responsibilities of the employee to the employee's detriment without reasonable justification.

2. Victimisation

An employer commits a breach of the right to dignity at work of an employee if he treats that employee less favourably than he would treat other persons and does so by reason that the employee has - (a) brought proceedings under this Act against the employer or any other person; (b) given evidence or information in connection with proceedings brought by any person under this Act against the employer or any other person; (c) otherwise done anything under or by reference to this Act in relation to the employer or any other person; (d) alleged that the employer or any other person has committed an act which (whether or not the allegation so states) would give rise to a claim under this Act, or by reason that the employer knows or suspects that the employee has done or intends to do any of those things.

To read the entire Bill go to this page on Tim Field's anti-bullying site:

www.successunlimited.co.uk/action/dignity.htm

At its AGM on 23rd November 2002 FtC's membership carried the following resolution *nem. con.*: "FTC supports Amicus in its efforts to effect the passage of the Dignity at Work bill through parliament and to see it become law."

FtC encourages everyone to write a short letter to their MP urging him/her to support the Dignity at Work Bill. You can also visit your MP's surgery or fax your MP via :

<http://www.faxyourmp.org.uk>.

If you are unsure who your MP is, see :

<http://www.locata.co.uk/commons/>

Cl^overCare

Chris Clode, National Coordinator of *Freedom to Care*, provides TRAINING for the handling of public concerns within social care through his consultancy, *Cl^overCare*. (*FtC and Cl^overcare are financially completely separate.*)

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Nurses not protected by PIDA?

It seems that nurses are not being protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act. Juliette Bradbury, a solicitor at law firm Russell Jones and Walker, said the Act had not yet proved itself able to protect nurses. She told a Royal College of Nursing Welsh board conference in November 2002:

"Since the Act came into force in 1999 there have been around 1,000 cases brought under it. Only four or five have gone right through to an employment tribunal." Mrs Bradbury added, "The Act has not shown it will protect nurses yet".

[See 'Nursing Times', 5th November 2002, Vol 98, No. 45, p. 2.]

A WELL EARNED ZERO-RATING?

FtC has been supporting a Coventry residential child care social worker, Pat Conneely, who raised evidenced concerns that the husband of a fellow staff member, then a serving policeman but now retired, doing unofficial work in a Coventry children's home for girls, was displaying grooming (seductive) behaviour towards at least one resident.

Pat was suspended following a pre-emptive counter-allegation that was subsequently found to be unsubstantiated. We believe there is sufficient evidence to indicate that this was intended to silence her. Late in 2000, Freedom to Care became seriously concerned that one of the girls may have been subject to sexual abuse and we contacted Coventry's Child Protection Unit and passed on our concerns, an unusual step for us. The girl who is the subject of these concerns is one of the two Care Leavers, who may not now be receiving the protection and support due to them under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

Perhaps they and their evidence are too much of an embarrassment to Coventry, currently "zero-rated" by the Government for its poor performance. Social Services Director, Jonathan Smith, left Coventry, following his Department's "zero-star" rating in May. On December 5th 2002, the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* wrote: "Staff from Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott's office and the Audit Commission were visiting Coventry to explain what the government plans to do about the city council's position as one of the country's worst authorities. Council chief executive Stella Manzie and council leader Cllr Nick Nolan were being told exactly how badly the authority has performed in the first national town hall league tables."

Pat Conneely has continued to advocate for these girls (at considerable personal cost to

herself), but neither Stella Manzie, the Chief Executive, nor the Social Services Managers have appeared to be willing to discuss these concerns with her. Those who were discussing the issue with her have now withdrawn to such an extent that Pat could not get any Managerial response to her requests for advice even on current children she was working with - leaving both her and the children considerably exposed. Now, her Grievances unheard, with no response from Coventry, Pat is off sick, but still determined to pursue the interests of the girls. She has contacted Councillors and local MP, Geoffrey Robinson, but has been met with either silence, hostility or inaction.

As a result of evidence given by Pat, we have written to Coventry and the Department of Health to ask if the ex-Policeman's name has been submitted to the Department's List 99/Protection of Children Act List of those barred from working with children or the current Criminal Records Bureau as "additional (non-conviction) information"? Also, we ask whether Coventry submitted the its information on him to the West Midlands Police with a view to an investigation.

PAID UP?

Has your subscription lapsed? If so, please send a cheque made payable to 'Freedom to Care' for £21 (£10 concessionary) as soon as possible (address on back page).

Would you like to join? Send a cheque (as above) or write to the PO Box for more details or see details and membership form at:

<http://www.freedomtocare.org>

Has your standing order gone out of date? It seems some members are still paying at the old rates. See current rates above, and please amend your standing order. There is also an s/o form on the website.

Public accountability is important. Join Freedom to Care and continue to receive *The Whistle*, attend meetings, receive advice, meet like-minded people and at the same time support us in our work. Thank you.

Annual General Meeting 2002

Freedom to Care Ltd (non-profit, limited by guarantee) held its 9th AGM, and annual gathering, at the National Institute of Social Work, Tavistock Place, London all day on Saturday 23rd November 2002.

In the election Mr Chris Clode and Mr Andy Taylor were elected as directors. Mr Lawrence Smyth and Mr Tim Field stepped down and were warmly thanked for three years of service. Both are running sister organisations and will continue to work with FtC.

As at 30th April 2002 FtC's total assets were £2,216.20 – in line with our policy to keep assets at the lowest workable level.

Mrs Sheila Porter-Williams' position as Membership Officer was ratified, and gratitude was expressed to Ms Anne Burge for her previous work in this post.

Bullied out of a Job

A computer contractor who worked on the Cattle Tracing System (CTS) between 1998 and 2000 was bullied out of his job. Mr T says he witnessed and was subjected to bullying in the workplace by co-workers and managers to a point that seriously affected his health. When T approached the management for a seating change to reduce potential conflict and stress he was initially told that this would be alright. In the event such a move was blocked, exacerbating the situation. Malicious gossip and misuse of the email system then undermined Mr T's standing and self-esteem. This situation of psychological conflict wasted considerable amounts of DEFRA money. In November 2000 Mr T was removed and has not worked since. He is now seeking legal redress, with some support from FtC and similar groups.

ACCOUNTABILITY WORKSHOPS

FtC held a well-attended one-day Accountability Workshop in 2002, to enhance the understanding of organisations and how to raise concerns in them, including professional and legal aspects. The Workshop is suitable for employees and employers interested in a more open and accountable style of management and problem-solving.

If you want to know more about the 2003 Accountability Workshop contact Chris Clode on 01978 750583 or clover.care@tesco.net.

Bullied teacher Compensated

Teacher Alan Powis (53) who claimed he had been bullied for years by his former headteacher before being sacked has been awarded £230,000 in an out of court settlement from Neath Port Talbot council in November 2002.

Mr Powis, of Llansamlet, was sacked in 1997 on grounds of gross misconduct, after five years of bullying by Sheena Ball, the former head of Coedffranc Junior School in Skewen. NUT Cymru regional secretary Gethin Lewis said: "He had support from his union, family and local paper, but nothing from the governing body - which supported the teacher - and nothing from the education authority."

"The lesson for all local authorities is that teachers can bully each other. It is all about the pressure on the system to get targets. Unfortunately, some people overreact and pass the pressure down to others."

Mr Powis decided to sue the education authority, but in the meantime, without a reference, he took jobs as a security guard and door-to-door salesman.

He added: "I sincerely hope it will give people the courage and belief that David can take on Goliath."

It is reported that one in three teachers suffer some form of bullying in the workplace, the majority of which are cases of men bullying women.

FREEDOM TO CARE

... is an independent, non-profit & entirely voluntary organisation. We are not lawyers. We are the UK's first whistleblower organisation, founded in 1991. We are a company limited by guarantee (Reg. 2973440).

PATRONS are John Hendy QC, Allan Levy QC and Austin Mitchell MP.

FOUNDER is Prof. Geoffrey Hunt.

WHAT WE DO We lobby and campaign for greater public accountability of large organisations and support conscientious employees who speak up.

STRUCTURE *Board of Directors:* Harold Hillman, Geoff Hunt, Andy Taylor, Chris Clode; *Company Secretary:* Rob McGregor; *National Coordinator:* Chris Clode; *Treasurer:* Chris Thomas; *Membership Officer:* Sheila Porter-Williams

WEB SITE: <http://www.freedomtocare.org>

MEMBERSHIP: £21 p.a. (£10 for those on low income); £35 group affiliation.

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THE WHISTLE Free, twice a year to members.

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