

Victims of 'predatory' council worker claim compensation

A scheme was set up for victims of a former social worker who faced criminal trial when he was found dead at the bottom of Salisbury Crag in 2020.

Edinburgh Council has received seven compensation claims from victims of former social worker, Sean Bell, who was found to be a prolific abuser.

A redress scheme was set up to help provide "a level of closure" to those who suffered abuse.

Bell was a senior social worker who was set to stand trial for criminal charges for abuse which occurred throughout his 30-year career when he was found dead at the bottom of Salisbury Crag in 2020.

Victims described him as a "predatory, controlling, serial abuser" who harmed people "sexually, physically, emotionally and psychologically".

Following his death an independent inquiry found he was protected by an "old boys network" at The City of Edinburgh Council.

Interviews with more than 50 witnesses and analysis of over 70,000 emails revealed he was "lecherous" and "predatory" in his attitude towards female colleagues.

A Freedom of Information request revealed that seven claims were made under a redress scheme established for his victims in the wake of the scandal.

The council has set aside £1.5 million to compensate survivors.

Claimants were deemed to be eligible if administrators Pinset Masons were "satisfied on the balance of probabilities" that they suffered "relevant abuse".

The council was previously criticised, however, for the terms of the scheme being too "narrow". Council whistleblower Christine Scott said last year it should have been extended "to include all victims, not just in the Sean Bell case" after some who suffered found they were not eligible.

She claimed one person had been denied compensation because they hadn't been physically or sexually assaulted by Bell, adding:

"Their definition of abuse is way back in the 1970s. There are other forms of abuse that certainly whistleblowers have been on the receiving end of."

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter



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