

Brilliant news; the tide is turning!

Tuesday, 17 October 2006

Sex abuse verdicts quashed again
Anver Daud Sheikh

A former care worker twice convicted of the same sex abuse offences allegedly committed in 1980 has been cleared by the Court of Appeal for a second time.

Anver Sheikh was convicted in 2002 of offences against two boys in his care at a North Yorkshire children's home where he worked as a housemaster.

He was jailed for eight years, but his conviction was overturned on appeal and a retrial ordered.

He was reconvicted in January 2005, but this too has now been quashed.

The prosecution, which had opposed the appeal, said it would not be seeking a retrial.

Mr Sheikh said: "I am happy to be out, but I am also bitter at the system - that the system has failed me.

"There are so many people like me who have been in prison without solid evidence."

Mr Sheikh's solicitor, Mark Newby, said after the hearing: "This case demonstrates the danger involved in such cases.

"There could be another 50 cases which should be making their way to the Court of Appeal."

Although the court had not yet given reasons for its decision, the judges were clearly worried by the case, he said.

In a statement, the Historical Abuse Appeals Panel said some of the false allegations against carers and teachers were "compounded by the complicity of the police in failing to carry out a fair and independent investigation".

The statement said: "Justice has finally been done for Anver Sheikh and he can return to his family from whom he was cruelly separated on two separate occasions.

"Very serious questions indeed are raised by the plight of Anver Sheikh and the many other appellants who still fight for their liberty."

The panel called for an immediate public inquiry into "this care homes scandal".

Claire Curtis-Thomas, MP for Crosby in Merseyside and chair of the all-party Parliamentary Group for Abuse Investigations, was among those who congratulated Mr Sheikh.

She said: "I am so relieved for Anver, but at the same time I believe he has been the subject of a monstrous abuse.

"No words can adequately describe the devastation that this has brought to him, his family and his community.

"For all of us who have been intimately involved in this case we have always known that he was innocent and failed to understand why the justice system continued to persecute him.

"We have asked for changes in the way that the police conduct these inquiries, but I am afraid they continue to abuse the processes for their own purposes."

North Yorkshire Police said they were not aware of any specific allegations but would respond later, if appropriate.