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PRESS RELEASE

Overseeing or overlooking? The GSCC and the universities

In a legal first, an excluded social work student has been restored to the Social Care Register by a decision of the Health, Education and Social Care Chamber (better known as the Care Standards Tribunal).

Bernd Sass, who was dismissed from his course by the University of Brighton, appealed against a subsequent decision to remove him from the social care register as well. Allan Norman, social worker and solicitor of Celtic Knot, represented him at his hearing in March, where he successfully resisted an attempt by the General Social Care Council to strike out his claim. Then the Council caved in, conceding his appeal, opening the way for last week's decision to restore him to the register.

According to the University's Pro-Vice Chancellor, "its decision was very substantially concerned with behaviour and attitude towards University and placement agency staff". Commenting, his solicitor observed, "this was a student whose conduct and demeanour antagonised and divided the University, and who paid a very heavy price when this was construed as misconduct."

For Bernd, the key issue was accountability: "the University decided not only to terminate my training, but then to use its final decision to scupper my career," he said. "And no-one, least of all the General Social Care Council, seemed able or willing to hold the University to account. This situation can have very detrimental effects on whistleblowing students and amount to misuse of the GSCC code."

Allan Norman explained, "the Council will now be asked to decide for themselves whether his conduct constituted misconduct. And he has a further right of appeal to the tribunal against any adverse registration or conduct decision."

Allan Norman is Principal Social Worker & Solicitor at Celtic Knot (www.celticknot.org.uk), an independent law firm and social work practice which represented Mr Sass against the GSCC. Allan Norman can be contacted using the details below.

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