

Sunday Herald - 12 June 2005

Psychological tests leave Shirley McKie 'traumatised'

By Liam McDougall, Home Affairs Editor

SHIRLEY McKie, the former police detective who lost her job following false accusations of perjury, has claimed her imminent court battle against the Scottish Executive is "traumatising" her, leaving her dependent on high doses of sedative medication.

McKie, who was accused of visiting the house of a murder victim after fingerprint analysts claimed they found her thumb print at the scene, has been placed on tranquillisers and an increased dosage of anti-depressant drugs.

She said in the last few weeks she had been driven to the brink by psychiatric examinations, carried out by doctors on behalf of her legal team and lawyers acting for the Executive, against whom she is fighting a £750,000 damages action.

She said: "Each time I have to see a different doctor I am re-traumatised. I have fought for eight years to stop myself from actually going mad."

McKie – who has post-traumatic stress disorder – said the examination centred on her mental state when she was told her print had been found at the murder scene; the day of her arrest and at her trial.

She said she was forced to relive each moment, despite knowing that it would cause her mental state to deteriorate.

"Last week, [when visiting the Executive's psychiatrist] it was disgusting. It was looking at my lowest points. It was very distressing because I was made to talk about how I felt being in the dock for three weeks when I was being tried for perjury."

She claimed the Executive was attempting to shift blame and make her believe her distress had been caused by the actions of the police.

McKie has called on the rules to be changed so courts have the power to appoint just one independent psychiatrist to carry out an examination.

McKie's action against the Executive is scheduled for next February. She was given permission to take the case forward two years ago, following her acquittal on a charge of perjury.

Her plans to sue the Scottish Criminal Records Office (SCRO), whose analysts made the erroneous identification, had been blocked by ministers who argued records office staff should be given immunity from prosecution. But a ruling by Lord Wheatley meant her claim could go ahead against the Executive, which will represent the SCRO.

McKie said: "The worst part was when I was cleared and yet the SCRO were still saying that they had got it right and that I was still guilty. Before that I had felt anxiety, even fear, but when that happened I just became so depressed."

McKie's father Iain, himself a former police officer, said: "Shirley has been through so much over the last eight years and she has been blocked at every turn. To be placed through the trauma of these examinations strikes me as inhumane."

McKie lost her job with Strathclyde Police after her thumb print was said to have been found at the Kilmarnock home of Marion Ross. In 1997, David Asbury was jailed for Ross's murder, but his conviction was overturned after independent experts cast doubt on SCRO claims prints found in the house were his.

TIMELINE

Jan 1997: McKie denies leaving print at murder scene.

Feb to May 1997: Goes off sick with depression.

March 1998: Arrested in "dawn raid" and charged with perjury.

May 1999: Unanimously cleared of charges of perjury.

Dec 1999: Discharged from police on medical grounds .
Successfully fights police decision not to give her a full pension.

Jun 2000: Justice Minister Jim Wallace apologises to McKie confirming print was not hers.

Feb 2003: Loses action against Strathclyde Police because she cannot prove malice.

Dec 2003: Scottish ministers criticised by Lord Wheatley and McKie allowed to take civil case against Scottish Executive.

Apr 2004: Strathclyde Police demand £23,000 in legal costs from McKie.

Feb 2006: £750,000 damages case scheduled against Scottish Executive.

**Copyright © 2005 smg sunday newspapers ltd.
no.176088**