



"False Accusations of MSBP/FII" © by Planet Autism

For a long time now, too long, an appalling situation has existed in which innocent, caring parents who have done nothing to harm their child, many of whom are in fact seeking healthcare and support for their children, have suffered false accusations of Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy – MSBP (now relabelled as Fabricated/Factitious/Fictitious or Induced Illness - FII). It can start with accusations of "emotional harm" or "over-anxiety" in a parent, or professionals misconstruing and then misrepresenting, of a child's difficulties through the lens of abuse or neglect. This is a good document to start reading with:

***"Mismanagement: Social and Family Policy Mr Bruce Clark, DfES: 2000-2005
MISDIRECTION of SOCIAL POLICY Assessing Ordinary Parents as Abusers Assessing Ordinary
Children as Victims"***

http://www.theoneclickgroup.co.uk/documents/ME-CFS_pol/Consensus%20Report%20-%20Family%20Law%20Reform.pdf

Dr Helen Hayward-Brown (completed her doctoral research in the social sciences - interdisciplinary: sociology, anthropology, psychology - on the subject of false accusations of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy [MSBP]) explains the whole MSBP/FII premise and why it is so wrong, here:

"False Accusations Of Munchausen Syndrome By Proxy"

<http://www.pnc.com.au/~heleneli/paper.htm>

Another Dr Helen Hayward Brown article (in Powerpoint presentation form):

"Medical expert testimony and MSBP"

http://www.liftingtheveil.org/pdf/Hayward_Brown-02.16.06-lecture-powerpoint.pdf

Reasons why professionals may overreact/falsely accuse

1. Unless a professional is trained in neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism and ADHD, they will not understand the traits in those conditions and may perceive them as signs of abuse or neglect. Or they may say that the parent is causing the difficulties or behaviours, especially if the child masks in school – which children with neurodevelopmental conditions often do. This is in fact well-known and stated on established autism websites such as the NAS, but there is such a level of ignorance among teachers and social workers that they assume a child who behaves well at school and has challenging behaviour at home, means that the problem lies at home (conversely, when a child acts out at school they still say the cause is from the home environment!)

2. Any condition in a child which is rare or hard to diagnose, may also bring risk of false accusations against parents. **But this is a failure in medics to test for and diagnose such conditions! It is a failure to do differential assessments of children to look at all possibilities and assumption of abuse at the first turn.**
3. There is unfortunately a hysterical culture of over-zealous child protection, resulting in many professionals covering their backs and assuming the worst.
4. Professionals such as teachers, may be annoyed with persistent parents who insist on appropriate support for their child which is not being provided and sometimes, teachers get fed-up and can in some instances become somewhat vengeful in response, reporting families to social services in spite. Yes, it does happen. All humans are fallible. MSBP/FII seems to be the current go-to, along with "emotional harm". **"The Schools that Spy on 'Munchausen's Mums' - Teachers accuse them of lying about children's autism to get attention"** <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2554867/The-schools-spy-Munchausen-Mums-Teachers-accuse-lying-childrens-autism-attention.html> Many such a tale is told on parent forums by upset, bewildered and worried parents.
5. Parents of autistic or ADHD children may have autism or ADHD themselves and may be misjudged or misrepresented by professionals due to atypical behaviours of the parent. Social communication problems leaves them vulnerable to discrimination and misunderstanding. Such parents may be excellent parents, but are misrepresented and discriminated against.
6. Disagreeing with a doctor's opinion or another that of any professional, seems to often bring a backlash of child protection accusations. **"The New Child Abuse Panic"** http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/12/opinion/sunday/the-new-child-abuse-panic.html?_r=1 Recall what happened to the parents of Ashya King, who sought alternative more successful treatment for their son's cancer. They went abroad with him for treatment and they were arrested and imprisoned. The public outcry when it was splashed across the media, meant they were eventually released, but the damage was done to both them and their son, who suffered ongoing separation anxiety. The parent's decision was the correct one, as he was successfully treated with the therapy they sought. Their healthcare decision was treated as a child protection issue and they were treated as criminals and abusers.

Media Attention on False Accusations of MSBP/FII

"Autism Eye Magazine" reports on how increasing numbers of autism parents are suffering such false accusations:

"Parents accused of fabricated illness"

<http://www.autismeye.com/parents-accused-of-fabricated-illness/#more>

In-depth report in "Autism Eye Magazine" here:

"Parent, Carer, Victim?"

http://media.wix.com/ugd/58c8f1_211doefb4ae842f5aba2e2d5b1519d42.pdf

Another Autism Eye article: <http://www.autismeye.com/digital-edition/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#6-7>

"Autism parents hit by abuse claims"

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/1258532.stm>

"Parents 'risk losing children' over MMR complaints"

<http://www.msbp.com/mmr.htm>

The One Click Group's web page **"UK Social Services Out of Control"** contains an article from the Sunday Times and other media attention and campaigning efforts.

<http://tinyurl.com/gr2cbpg>

Sadly and inexplicably, this 2004 inquiry never adequately happened, 2004 and we are still facing the problem today:

"Asperger's abuse inquiry pledged"

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/3687612.stm>

Research

A 1991 paper, which revealed misrepresentation of abuse - with the issue having got even worse since that time. Six families, falsely accused of emotional harm, when it was actually Asperger's in their children:

"Asperger's Syndrome – Who is Being Abused?"

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1793147/pdf/archdischo0649-0033.pdf>

"Difficult and ambiguous medical diagnoses and allegations of child abuse"

<http://wp.stu.ca/narrativestudies/research/difficult-and-ambiguous-medical-diagnoses-and-allegations-of-child-abuse/>

Spheres of Expertise

MSBP/FII is an extremely rare pattern of behaviours (it is not a condition in itself) exhibited by a parent or carer with a mental illness of some description.

Only a very experienced psychologist or even more appropriately, psychiatrist, can accurately diagnose such a pattern of behaviour. And an assessment for it should be a differential assessment also, to ensure the wrong outcome is not reached. This will of course mean ensuring the child does not have a health condition which may be rare or hard to diagnose or something classed as an invisible disability (such as neurodevelopmental conditions).

So when a teacher, social worker, medical doctor or other unqualified professional, starts throwing such a label around, it becomes very dangerous indeed.

People must never professionally comment or speculate outside their own sphere of expertise and especially if they do not have first-hand experience of the individuals!

Charities/Organisations information about the issue

"The Tymes Trust" (ME/CFS) <http://www.tymestrust.org/pdfs/falseallegations.pdf>

The NAS has not publicly spoken out, although they are aware of the issue. They instead have given a falsely accused parent, a platform at one of their conferences. Tim Gilling spoke at the NAS Safeguarding Conference in January 2015, here is the conference video, in which he speaks of how he and his wife were falsely accused of MSBP/FII:

"Getting it Wrong: The Impact on Families"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDKS6NmAEWo>

"Ehler's Danlos support UK" Ehler's Danlos is a connective tissue disorder, commonly co-existing with autism.

"EDS - Child Safeguarding – Non- Accidental Injury (NAI) – FII/Munchausen by Proxy"

<http://www.ehlers-danlos.org/patient-support/your-child-and-eds/child-protection-and-ehlers-danlos-syndrome/eds-child-safeguarding-non-accidental-injury-nai-fii-munchausen-by-proxy/>

Professionals Speaking Out

Interview with paediatrician (expert in ME/CFS) Dr Nigel Speight, regarding the false accusations against ME/CFS families <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XcRZ01vO53c>

Dr Sue Gerrard's (parent of a child diagnosed with autism, trained biologist, psychologist and primary teacher) wonderful blog **"Moving on From Bowlby"** and her post **"Fabricated or Induced Illness"** <https://movingonfrombowlby.wordpress.com/2013/02/18/fabricated-or-induced-illness/>

Jan Loxley-Blount (parent of two autistic children with EDS, former teacher and children's work trainer & advocate) <http://www.parents-protecting-children.org.uk/documents/Jan's%20Church%20Times%20Article%2021%2002%2003%20%28Cut%29.pdf>

The damaging legacy of false accusations

One Asperger's woman's story of the damage inflicted on her family by false accusations from professionals, in her childhood:

"The Damaging Legacy of Parent Blame Blaming Parents Hurts More than Just the Parents"

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/aspergers-diary/201203/the-damaging-legacy-parent-blame>

"Traumatizing your DNA: Researcher warns that it isn't 'all in the genes'"

"After an exhaustive survey of contemporary epigenetics studies, one researcher has concluded that some of the effects of stress, cancer and other chronic diseases may be passed on to our offspring -- and theirs -- through deep and complicated underlying cellular mechanisms that scientists are just beginning to understand."

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/03/110323104737.htm>

The NHS itself, admits that discrimination against a person makes them ill, in this document about discrimination against staff:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/wres-why-how-rk.pdf>

What can you do if falsely accused?

You are legally entitled to **record meetings** with social services:

<http://www.transparencyproject.org.uk/press/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Parentsrecordingsocialworkersguidancenote.pdf> do so, to protect yourself and prove what has been said and don't let them bully you out of it.

Do not sign anything offered to you by social services without first consulting a solicitor. Check out anything they claim/state to do with your children or your parental rights. Do not allow them to see your children alone (such as in school) and make it clear that unless there is actual evidence of serious harm, your permission is necessary. If it becomes unavoidable, find a children's advocate who you have met first, to be present on behalf of the children when social services see them.

Unless there is risk of "serious harm" to either child or referrer, all social services investigations are meant to be transparent – e.g. The parent has to be made aware of them. Challenge this if it has not been the case.

http://www.safenetwork.org.uk/help_and_advice/Pages/making_a_referral.aspx and <http://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/section-5-procedures.html>

Always have a 3rd party **friend or advocate present** when meeting with social services, or any professional that you have doubts about or you have reason to believe is targeting you with false accusations or suspicions. You should do this 100% of the time when you have ASC, neurological/mental impairment or a learning disability yourself. See this webpage for advice about advocacy, obtaining copies of yours or your child's records and rights:

<http://evolution.wix.com/planetautism#!your-autism-rights/c1t44>

Keep a record of any **rights and laws that have been breached** (e.g. *Human Rights Act, Disability Discrimination Act 2005, Equality Act 2010, Autism Act 2009, Autism Strategy 2010, Convention of the Rights of the Child, NHS Constitution, Data Protection Act 1998 – only factual information must be recorded*) and as soon as possible seek legal advice. Many solicitors do half an hour free legal advice but do be sure they are a **family lawyer**.

Contact "Parents Protecting Children" at parentsprotectingchildren@live.co.uk (Jan Loxley-Blount) as she has offered advice and information to many falsely accused parents of children with disabilities and conditions.

Report professionals behaving unethically to the relevant **regulatory bodies** such as Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) for social and other healthcare workers, General Medical Council (GMC) for all types of doctor, British Psychological Society (BPS) for all types of psychologist and consider also your local Healthwatch.

Contact the national/**leading charity** for the condition that your child has, they will likely have had other parents contact them before and have advice to offer. Locate any evidence of how the condition presents which offers a sensible and bone fide alternative to their view of MSBF/FII.

Contact a supportive **local councillor or your MP** to obtain support and shine a light on the injustice and the impact it has had on your family.

Use and quote any **official guidance** in communications with professionals that supports your case, such as if you have a disability which has been misrepresented:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190544/00374-2009DOM-EN.pdf

"2.21 Where a parent is disabled it is important that they are receiving support to meet their own needs, and are supported in their parenting role so that they are able to fulfil their responsibilities. Information is available on working with parents with a learning disability in Good practice guidance on working with parents with a learning disability (DoH and DfES, 2007) (available to download from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090217020108/http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_075119). LSCBs should work collaboratively with adult services to ensure that children are not put at risk of harm because of a lack of support to their parents. Where a disabled child has been subject to abuse or neglect, perpetrated by someone other than a parent, the impact of such abuse on the parents needs to be acknowledged and appropriate support made available."

Contact bone fide **support organisations** (you may also have a local condition-specific support group):

www.false-allegations.org.uk/

Be careful who you contact, some campaigning websites may attract troublemakers, who undertake non-peaceful protests and commit breaches of the peace, which attracts bad media, so if you align yourself with the wrong one, this too will be used against you and will make you be taken less seriously.

Do not discuss the allegations or name guilty professionals on social media/online. If they try to take your child as a result of the allegations, this will be used against you in court.

If you can, get a respected (non-family member is preferable so they cannot allege bias) acquaintances (even better if they are professionals) who have known you some time, to write "to whom it may concern" **character references** about you to vouch for your stability, parenting etc. These may be useful if it comes to court but can also be used for giving copies to doubting professionals making false allegations against you.

If you can afford it, and you think it will help and especially if you are facing a court situation, pay for an **independent social worker parenting assessment**. Likewise, for any private assessments of the condition you believe your child has, to substantiate your reports of the difficulties. A diagnosis should help a lot.

Seek out **parent forums** for the condition in question, you may find very useful information and advice offered by others who have been in that situation.

Where applicable, undertake a **Freedom of Information** request via the "What Do They Know" website on the relevant local authority asking for statistics on accusations of MSBP/FII against parents. It may be useful evidence if there is a pattern in that authority. If they say they do not record such information, contact the Department for Education who are responsible for children's social care and ask that they instigate a policy of recording it.

Consider "counter-attack", by making a **formal complaint** against those making the false allegations. They may back down once they see you aren't taking it lying down. Be aware however that sometimes, they may use the fact that you made a complaint (*especially if it involved complaining against more than one professional*) as more evidence of your supposed MSBP/FII status. Outside of concrete physical evidence such as video recording of a genuine MSBP/FII act, any of the supposed traits on the list of MSBP/FII behaviours could apply to any normal parent. So be sure you have some evidence that they are lying or wrongly targeting you, otherwise it's possible for them to explain away their accusations as genuine professional opinion under a duty of child protection and they could fit all your actions to this supposed diagnosis.

I would also advise you to keep journals of your child's behaviour, symptoms or difficulties and where possible video and audio record evidence, so that professionals can see it's not your parenting or anything you have done and you are not inventing the difficulties or symptoms!