Trust faces protest over claims that nurse's career was 'ruined'

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The husband of a nurse has claimed his wife’s career was “ruined” by unfounded allegations and “bullying”, which led her to give up her job at Worcestershire Health and Social Care Trust.

Nigel Gilbert was among a group of friends and family who took part in a demonstration at the trust’s headquarters on 22 July, as part of an ongoing campaign to restore the reputation of retired community psychiatric nurse Ingra Kirkland.

The group, which calls itself Betrayed By Her Trust, has been campaigning for more than two years after Ms Kirkland left the organisation under a cloud in December 2011. She had been employed by the trust for about 20 years when she was accused of being involved in record-keeping anomalies and moved from her post to a job on a ward.

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Nigel Gilbert

However, her supporters claim the former Unison steward did little more than warn a fellow nurse she had forgotten to record an injection and advise her colleague to correct the omission.
Ms Kirkland underwent an internal investigation and was due to appear at a disciplinary hearing when she decided to accept a retirement deal, because she was scared of being sacked and losing her pension, according to Mr Gilbert.

The deal included a compromise agreement, which means Ms Kirkland – who is not involved in the campaign – feels unable to speak to the media for fear of legal action.

The group is calling for an inquiry into the way Ms Kirkland was treated and has made a series of allegations, which the protestors spelt out on placards at last month’s demonstration.

“We’re not looking to have people hung, drawn and quartered or anything. We just want our specific allegations looked into. It’s an issue of accountability,” said Mr Gilbert who said the campaigners were also seeking an apology from the trust.

He said the couple’s lives had been “blighted” by the situation. “We think about this most days,” he said. “Ingra’s self-respect and confidence has been very damaged. I say to her she’s got nothing to be ashamed about, but she feels humiliated and cheapened.”

The trust told Nursing Times the case was a confidential matter and it could not respond in detail.

“The circumstances that relate to this involve a confidential HR matter regarding a former employee of the trust,” the trust said in a statement. “As such it would not be appropriate for the trust to provide any further comment.”

The Betrayed By Her Trust group has already staged a number of demonstrations and set up a campaign website. Another protest is planned towards the end of August.