



Edward Timpson MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Professor Nick Frost
Independent Chair of Bradford Safeguarding Children Board

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Dear Nick,

Thank you for publishing the serious case review into the death of Hamzah Khan swiftly. It is important that we ensure rigorous public scrutiny in instances where children are seriously harmed or died under neglectful conditions. As the Secretary of State emphasised yesterday, this is not to seek out scapegoats, but to be clear about what happened in the past and try to ensure that similar mistakes are not made in future.

With that in mind, I have deep concerns over the Hamzah Khan serious case review. In particular I am concerned that it fails to explain sufficiently clearly the actions taken, or not taken, by children's social care when problems in the Khan family were brought to their attention on a number of occasions. The list below is not exhaustive but includes some of the most glaring absences.

- December 2006: one of Hamzah Khan's siblings spoke to the police about domestic violence at home and the police referred him to children's social care. The child was returned home. Was the child assessed? If not, why not?
- March 2007 – one of Hamzah Khan's siblings – it is not clear in the SCR whether it was the same one – was remanded by magistrates and placed with foster carers for two nights, then returned home. Was the child assessed by children's social care? If not, why not?
- May 2007 – the child who appeared before magistrates in March 2007 was injured running away from his father. While at A&E he requested help to live away from his family and was referred to children's social care. He was given emergency accommodation but returned home by the end of May. The SCR says that a statutory assessment could have been expected at this point. Was the child assessed? If not, why not?
- April 2009 - three of the Khan children were not collected from primary school. Following a welfare visit, police reported to children's social care that there were insufficient beds for at least one of the children in the

house and the mother appeared to be under the influence of an unknown substance. The SCR says that a statutory assessment could have been expected at this point. Why was no assessment undertaken?

- Late 2010 – the SCR refers to ‘correspondence’ between health visitors, education, early childhood services and children’s social care ‘which centred on the difficulties in seeing the children’. This was followed by reports (it is unclear from whom) that some of the children were living outside Bradford. What action did children’s social care take at this point?
- January 2011 – the school attended by one of Hamzah Khan’s siblings in year 8 reported to children’s social care that attendance had fallen to 51 per cent and apparently (it is not clear from the SCR) reported that the child appeared physically neglected. Children’s social care decided this was a school attendance issue and declined to assess. Why?
- March 2011 – an anonymous referral was made to police of shouting and swearing at the children. Why did children’s social care rely on the ESW (education social work) report that concerns did not appear substantiated as the younger children had been ‘placed in Portsmouth’, and undertake no further inquiries of their own?
- I note that the serious case review alludes to ‘the extent to which Hamzah was unknown and invisible to services throughout his short life’. The SCR makes clear that local agencies had concerns about the poor attendance of some of Hamzah’s siblings and the non-enrolment of others. What actions were taken, and when, to establish the causes of this? What actions were taken to remedy it? What, if any, consideration was given to the possibility of neglectful parenting being a factor in low attendance?
- The SCR refers to attempts ‘to establish the whereabouts of the three youngest children after the health visitor initially identified that Hamzah was not registered with a GP’. What form did these attempts take? Given that the children appear never to have left Bradford, what prevented the children’s whereabouts being established quickly?
- From the SCR, I can see that children’s social care made a number of visits to the children’s home. What is unclear is the outcome of these visits, whether any conversations took place with the children and whether there was any follow up. If no action was taken, why not?


All of these were missed opportunities to protect the children in the house.

It is tragic beyond words that by the time a health visitor did trigger concerns about the whereabouts of the younger children in the household, who were missing from health and education services altogether, Hamzah Khan was already dead.

It is essential that answers to the questions above are put into the public domain so that the people of Bradford and the public are reassured that you have been clear enough about the past to ensure that such mistakes will not be repeated in

future.

I look forward to hearing swiftly how you intend to provide these answers

Yours sincerely,


Edward Timpson MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

Copied to Tony Reeves and Mark Burns-Williamson