

Story from: VCF – The Victoria Climbié Foundation UK
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Victoria Climbié Foundation statement following Baby P convictions Call for a Public Inquiry

VCF- The Victoria Climbié Foundation is deeply saddened by the tragic death of yet another child, which could have been prevented, in a case that may yet prove to be worse than that of Victoria Climbié.

No one has been convicted of his murder, no one has been sacked, no one has resigned, and no one has fully apologised for his death. Haringey Council, notable as the same borough that failed Victoria Climbié, has issued three written warnings to frontline staff, but there has been no accountability at senior management level.

Independent reviews are currently underway in relation to this case. A Serious Case Review by Haringey's Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has blamed legal advice taken in the week before Baby P's death for the decision not to take him into care. The review's executive summary, which looks at the statutory procedures and lessons to be learned through child deaths or serious injury, was published by Haringey on 11 November 2008.

A review of services involved in child welfare in Haringey was ordered by Ed Balls on 12 November, and VCF welcomes this urgent action by the government to look at procedural and structural failures, particularly in cases that continue to mirror that of Victoria Climbié. An England-wide independent review of child protection services was ordered by Children's Minister Beverley Hughes on the same day: a decision welcomed by VCF, and a request the foundation made to government earlier this year at its annual conference 'Victoria Climbié 8 Year On, Does Every Child Matter?'

As in the case of Antoine and Keniece Ogunkoya, whose mother was convicted of manslaughter as a result of diminished responsibility, VCF is calling for full disclosure of the subsequent reports to find out what happened, and to understand where there are similarities to other cases.

What is shocking in both cases is the claim that these reviews were independent and transparent. What VCF knew, and what has now been admitted following the Haringey report, is that the same external consultant commissioned by both local authorities was not given access to key staff or documents.

It is unacceptable in that these cases are not isolated, and the current remit of the serious case review can only continue this trend across the country. It is not mandatory for families to be consulted, and a local authority can, in effect, carry out reviews of their own department and staff, and therefore predetermine the outcome of a review.

VCF has continued to highlight its concerns about serious case reviews, not least that they are internal. In November 2007 the foundation wrote to safeguarding children boards in London, to bring to the fore the need for lessons not only to be learned, but for theory to be put into practice.

Whilst the foundation applauds the Government for bringing about reform change - a move brought about by the Victoria Climbié Inquiry- it is calling for a review of these child protection reforms as they are clearly not working. In fact VCF was extremely vocal in calling for a review six months ago.

The foundation is calling for this review to address the implementation of the child protection reforms. This is a concern echoed by safeguarding professionals- many of whom have expressed their unease about the lack of change at operational level, specifically regarding a number of recent public-interest cases, including Tahla Ikram, Khrya Ishaq, Antoine and Keniece Ogunkoya and now Baby P.

VCF- The Victoria Climbié Foundation is calling for a public inquiry into the death of Baby P to uncover the systematic and operational failures and why children continue to die in same or similar circumstances post-Victoria. VCF has previously called for a public inquiry into the deaths of Antoine and Keniece Ogunkoya.

It hopes the failings identified by Ofsted, the Healthcare Commission and the Chief Inspector of Constabulary into Haringey Council do not detract from the need for a full public enquiry.

VCF- The Victoria Climbié Foundation was established by Mr and Mrs Climbié (Victoria's parents) to campaign for improvement in child protection policies and practices and to ensure effective links & coordination between statutory agencies, care services and BMER communities.

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