



2020-0028127POSoS

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

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Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP

By email: bennh@parliament.uk

Your ref: HB4907

14th August 2020

Thank you for your email of 8 June, also addressed to the Home Secretary, enclosing correspondence representative of several of your constituents, regarding the death of Shukri Abdi. I apologise for the delay in replying to you.

Any death of a child is a tragedy and it is right that we look at any lessons that can be learnt from Shukri's death so that we can make sure we improve the safeguards offered to all our children and young people.

Local authorities are statutorily required to notify the independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (the Panel) and, by extension, my department and Ofsted, of any incident where a child dies or is seriously harmed, and abuse or neglect is known or suspected. Bury Council accordingly notified the Panel of the death of Shukri Abdi on 30 July 2019 via the statutory serious incident notification process.

In line with guidance, the Panel then commissioned the local statutory safeguarding partners (children's services, police, and health) to undertake a rapid review of the circumstances of the case, and report back to the Panel within 15 working days.

Rapid reviews should determine what happened and why, and determine whether any abuse or neglect was a factor in the case. If abuse and neglect is found to be a factor and there are concerns about how different agencies worked with the child and family, then a local learning review (previously known as serious case reviews) should be undertaken.

In August 2019 Bury Safeguarding Partnership concluded that the criteria for a serious case review/child safeguarding practice review had not been met.

In June this year I wrote to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel to request that they assure themselves that the original decision by the Bury Safeguarding Partnership not to undertake a local child safeguarding practice review remains robust. I enclose a copy of my letter to the Interim Chair for your further information.

I understand that the Safeguarding Partnership in Bury is awaiting the outcome of the inquest which is now set for November. Whilst I understand the importance of the Coroner reviewing the case, I am also very clear that there

are lessons to be learnt from every child death and the government has been clear that local partners should quickly establish the facts of the case and assess whether there are systemic issues that need addressing. I expect the Panel to continue to work closely with local safeguarding partners on this point.

The government has sent a clear message to schools that bullying, including cyberbullying, for whatever reason, is unacceptable. It can have a devastating effect on individuals, blight their education, and have serious and lasting consequences for their mental health.

All schools are legally required to have a behaviour policy with measures to prevent all forms of bullying. Schools have the freedom to develop their own anti-bullying strategies appropriate to their environment and are held to account by Ofsted.

On 7 June, we announced a £750,000 extension to our anti-bullying grant programme, which supports schools to tackle bullying. This includes projects targeting bullying of particular groups, such as those who are victims of hate related bullying.

All schools have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This duty obliges schools to have regard to my department's' statutory safeguarding guidance, "Keeping Children Safe in Education".

Amongst other things the guidance is clear that all staff have a role to play in child protection, that if staff have any concerns about a child they should act immediately and where appropriate referrals should be made to children's social care and or the police.

With regard to the school's Ofsted status, the school was inspected in May 2018, as a result of which, it was placed in special measures. The Regional Schools Commissioner worked with the school and brought in Oak Learning Partnership (the Trust) for support in November 2018, ahead of the school formally joining the Trust in April 2019.

The March 2019 monitoring report noted that leaders and managers were taking effective action towards the removal of special measures. The monitoring report is available at: [tinyurl.com/Y7KUUL8C](https://www.tinyurl.com/Y7KUUL8C). It also noted improvements in the behaviour of pupils

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Williamson', with a large circular flourish at the end.

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education