



**Edward Timpson MP**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT

tel: 0370 000 2288 [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus)

Amy Weir  
Coventry Safeguarding Children Board  
4th Floor  
Broadgate House  
Coventry  
CV1 1NG

16 September 2013

Dear Ms Weir

I read with great sadness the Serious Case Review (SCR) into the tragic death of Daniel Pelka commissioned by the Coventry Safeguarding Children Board.

I am grateful that this review has been carried out swiftly and that the report has been published in full. This has not always happened in the past. As you will be aware, it has been a high priority for this Government to ensure rigorous investigation of serious cases of this nature and for the full facts to be made public, in order that lessons can be learned, services improved and public confidence in our child protection system restored.

The SCR sets out much of the narrative of this case. It concludes there were specific failures by a number of local agencies, including social care services, health services, a school and the police. The SCR reveals numerous opportunities for professionals to intervene to protect Daniel, yet no decisive intervention was made. It reveals a quite inappropriate and naïve application of the rule of optimism in relation to this family's ability to change, and a tendency on the part of professionals to think that calling a meeting was the same as protecting a child. The report shows the failure of professionals to consider the impact of domestic violence on children. It is a saddening conclusion that the failure by all professionals ever to speak to Daniel himself about his home life meant that, "despite Daniel being the focus of concern for all of the practitioners, in reality he was rarely the focus of their interventions".

Now that these failures have been set out publicly in your report, people in Coventry and across the country will want to know why they occurred. The SCR suggests that the particulars of the case – including the manipulative

behaviour of Ms Luczak and Mr Krezolek – go some way to explaining the failure to protect Daniel. But the report catalogues a number of basic practice failures – to share information, to keep accurate records, to use records appropriately, to carry out professional assessments adequately. The SCR suggests these failures could be related to the nature of 'management support and advice', 'efficiency of systems and processes', training, workload or 'organisational context'. Its analysis, however, stops at that point.

Such an analysis is essential to ensure that local agencies in Coventry take the action necessary to address the root causes of the specific failures. I am asking you, therefore, to set out clearly how you propose to deepen the analysis begun in this SCR and address why particular failures occurred. This includes, but is not limited to:

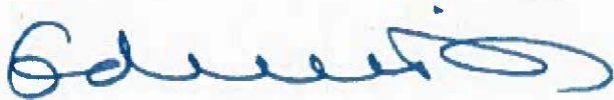
1. Why was basic information not recorded properly both within and between agencies?
2. Why was information needed to protect Daniel not shared between the relevant agencies?
3. Why did four separate assessments by children's social care all fail to identify the risk to Daniel and what was the oversight of those decisions?

This is not just about accountability. It is critical to improving child protection practice across the country. Until it is clearer why such basic practice failures occurred across agencies, it is difficult to believe that it will be possible to reassure the people of Coventry and the wider public that the necessary practice reforms have been made in response to Daniel's tragic death.

Those intent on carrying out wicked crimes may always find ways of doing so despite the very best efforts of committed professionals using the best of practice throughout our child protection system. But it is our collective duty to ensure that, when things do go wrong, we learn everything we can from the mistakes which were made.

I therefore look to Coventry Safeguarding Children Board to set out the further steps it intends to take to understand why these failures occurred and so reassure the people of Coventry, the wider public and me, that vulnerable children will be better protected today and in the future. I ask that you set out by the end of this week how, and to what timescale, you will deepen the analysis begun by the SCR. I would also request that you set out the actions that have already been taken, or have so far been planned, to respond to the findings in today's report.

I am copying this letter to the Leader of Coventry Council, the police and crime commissioner for Coventry and the West Midlands and the three MPs for Coventry.

Yours sincerely,  


**Edward Timpson MP**  
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