

Press release

Social Work Scotland responds to Liam Fee significant case review

20th June 2017; 1pm; for immediate release

Speaking about the findings of the Significant Case Review into Liam Fee's death, Social Work Scotland's Vice-President Jackie Irvine said:

"Liam's death was an absolute tragedy and the level of cruelty that Liam experienced was deeply shocking. What made it worse was that the abuse was carried out by the very people Liam should have been able to trust the most: his mum and his step mum.

"It was really important that all the organisations involved: police, social work, education and health looked back to see if there was anything that professionals could have done better. And it is clear that they have all made significant progress since the time of Liam's death three years ago.

"The fact that the report states Liam's death could not have been predicted, does not mean we have nothing to learn. This report will be analysed by all of us who work in child protection, to make sure we understand how to improve things in our areas too.

"There is a concern in the report that there is an over-reliance on social work, with some individuals feeling that the issues with Liam Fee's family could not be so serious because social work was not involved. This is a dangerous place to be – it is everyone's job to make sure children are safe. All professionals should be curious about children and follow up any concerns they have.

"It is important to make clear that this is not about the Named Person legislation. Organisations have always had a responsibility to share information where there is a concern for a child's welfare. We will learn from the facts of this case how we can do this as well as possible in future.

"What we saw here were manipulative individuals who deceived a range of services in order to cover up their treatment of Liam. Cases like this are exceptional and children dying at the hands of their parents remain a rare occurrence in Scotland. Parents are the primary protectors of their children and when that relationship fails and where people go out of their way to keep agencies at arm's length, as Liam's did, children can be at terrible risk".

As the leadership body for social work, Social Work Scotland is working closely with the Scottish Government and other partners to support the child protection improvement programme and work towards prevention and specifically tackling neglect.

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Notes:

1. Jackie Irvine is the President of Social Work Scotland and the Chief Social Work Officer in West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership.
2. Social Work Scotland is the professional leadership body for social workers www.socialworkscotland.org
3. Social Work Scotland exists to promote social work, to influence policy and legislation and to support the development of the social work profession.