



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

Ministerial  
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13<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Dear Sir Stephen,

Thank you for your letter of 30 May to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions regarding the Nottingham City Safeguarding Adults Board (NCSAB) report: “Billy”. I am replying on behalf of the Secretary of State, as this is an area of work I am responsible for and I responded last week to an Adjournment Debate on this issue.

I am aware of the report that the DWP did not provide the NCSAB with the 2014 Work Capability Assessment and the claim that officials ‘hid’ information from the board, but as I said in the House last week, this is simply not true. Since December 2020, my department has cooperated fully and openly with Nottingham City Safeguarding Adults Board in this sad case and I am glad to see that their report recognises the significant changes the DWP has made in its support of vulnerable claimants since 2019.

The NCSAB examined the case thoroughly and the DWP provided them with detailed information, that was in scope of the review, including the two years leading up to Mr Graham’s tragic death. Officials also briefly summarised information from before 2017, as we were asked to do.

The NCSAB's published report included a wording change, stating that agencies were asked to “provide additional information”, not “briefly summarise” as in previous versions. This slight wording change could have led to the wrong impression that the DWP should have provided every single form and document relating to Mr Graham’s benefit claim; even those outside the scope of the review.

The NCSAB extensively reviewed the findings from the 2021 judicial review proceedings, in which a former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions successfully defended a claim in the High Court challenging some of the decisions made in this case.

That judgment referred to the content of a previous Work Capability Assessment of Mr Graham's, and the Safeguarding Adults Board clearly understood from that, and the other information provided, what officials had discovered about Mr Graham's state of mind. Therefore, it is unclear what the DWP would have gained by "hiding" it, when the Board had stated they had reviewed these findings.

When considering the reports about any information not supplied by the DWP, it is important to understand the context and nature of the recommendations made by Nottingham City Safeguarding Adults Board. Five recommendations were made, with one specifically aimed at the DWP, working jointly with Nottingham City Safeguarding Adults Board. The Department for Work and Pensions has accepted that recommendation, and my officials will work constructively and collaboratively with the NCSAB on that.

The national guidance on SABs says that: "The purpose of a SAR is not to hold any individual or organisation to account as there are other processes and regulatory bodies available for that purpose; they are about learning lessons for the future".

Both officials and I are committed to transparency in assisting SABs to achieve this purpose. This commitment is why we have continued to talk with the Nottingham City Safeguarding Adults Board in this case, and we welcome having further conversations with them if needed. The department will continue to engage with all SABs and similar bodies to provide all relevant material held by the DWP to support their reviews, as part of our approach to learning and continuing to improve our services.

As I have said, the Nottingham City Safeguarding Adults Board has recognised changes made by the DWP and last week in the House of Commons I highlighted several of these initiatives. These changes include visiting vulnerable customers, where they have ceased to engage with the department. Following two unsuccessful visits, where concerns about the customer remain, the claim will no longer automatically be closed. Instead, the case will be escalated to an Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader (ACSSL), who will liaise with relevant external agencies to assure the customer's safety. We

have introduced over 30 Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders to support colleagues when dealing with customers who may be vulnerable or at-risk.

I am very keen to continue regularly engaging with stakeholders, including from mental health charities and other organisations, in order to make improvements to our services for our customers. I recently met with Rethink, the mental health charity, who were representing the families of some benefit claimants who have passed away, and it is my intention to organise a future meeting with a representative member of the families, in partnership with Rethink. I look forward to keeping Parliament updated on this important work as it develops.

Thank you for having taken the time to write regarding this important matter, and I hope you will find this reply reassuring.

With best wishes,

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Tom Pursglove". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the first name.

**Tom Pursglove MP**

Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work



## Work and Pensions Committee

30 May 2023

### **Rt Hon Mel Stride MP**

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions  
(By e-mail only)

Dear Mel,

#### **Nottingham City Safeguarding Adults Board Report: “Billy”**

I am writing in relation to the recently published report, [Nottingham City Safeguarding Adults Board Safeguarding Adults Review: ‘Billy’](#).

It has been [reported](#) that DWP did not provide the review team with the individual’s 2014 limited capability for work questionnaire and the notes from the 2014 work capability assessment.

I would be grateful if you could set out why a decision was taken to not share this material with the review team and whether the information was specifically requested by them.

Further, given your commitment to transparency, I would be grateful if you could consider that your Department now, as a matter of course, makes available to Safeguarding Adult Boards (and equivalent bodies) all relevant material held by DWP, including assessment notes and forms, when a review is taking place. This would help ensure lessons can be learned and improvements made to services.

I would be grateful for your response by Tuesday 13 June. As is usual practice with the Committee’s correspondence, I will be publishing this letter and your response on the Committee’s website.

Yours sincerely,

**Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP**  
**Chair, Work and Pensions Committee**