

PRESS CUTTING

**Times Online**  
**6 January 2009 (pg1 of 3)**

**Baby P social work chief sues for pay off**



( Ian Nicholson/PA)

Sharon Shoesmith was dismissed from her £100,000 role as director of children's services with no pay in lieu of notice



(ITN)

Baby P, who was subjected to horrific abuse before his death, despite regular contact with social workers, doctors and police

Rosemary Bennett, Social Affairs Correspondent

The children's services chief sacked without compensation for her role in the death of Baby P could end up with a generous pay off after all.

Sharon Shoesmith, 55, will this week launch an appeal against the decision to dismiss her from the £100,000 a-year post and employment lawyers said today her case had a reasonable chance of success.

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Ms Shoesmith was removed from her post as director of children's services at Haringey Council on December 1 but she remained suspended on full pay until councillors decided she should be dismissed with no pay off a week later.

A government-commissioned report found there had been a "fundamental loss of trust and confidence" in her ability, and listed a catalogue of failures at her department.

A panel of three elected councillors will hear her internal appeal, but she will also have the right to take her case to an independent employment tribunal if she fails.

It is highly unusual for public servants to be dismissed without any pay in lieu of notice or compensation.

Ronnie Fox, principal of City employment law firm Fox, said she has two grounds for appeal.

"The first is that due process was not followed, that she was not presented properly with the accusations or given a chance to explain herself. However even if she wins on those grounds she still may not be entitled to compensation as the employer would argue that even if they had followed due process the outcome would have been the same," Mr Fox told the Times.

"The second is that she was not guilty of gross misconduct, that it was someone else's fault or or the facts were not as presented."

He said the decision by Ed Balls, the Education Secretary, to say publicly that she should not be given a penny in compensation will not help the council.

"Unfortunately for the employer there appears to have been a direction from a politician, before an investigation by the employer took place," he said.

It is thought she could be awarded up to a year's salary in lieu of notice, as well as tens of thousands of pounds in compensation, although she may have to go to a full independent tribunal before the case is settled.

Baby P was died of his injuries in August 2007 despite being visited by Haringey social workers and other professionals on at least 60 separate occasions.

His mother, 27, pleaded guilty to causing or allowing his death and her boyfriend, 32, and their lodger Jason Owen, 36, were found guilty of the same charge. The will be sentenced in the spring

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Opposition politicians urged Haringey to stand firm.

Robert Gorrie, leader of Haringey's Liberal Democrat opposition, said local residents would be "rightly outraged" if the council agreed to a large pay-off.

"We have said from the outset that those responsible for this tragedy should be held to account and that there should be no rewards for failure," he said.

"Sharon Shoesmith was responsible for the council service that failed Baby P. I hope the original council decision to terminate employment without payment of notice is upheld."

Michael Gove, the Shadow Education Secretary, said: "Rather than compensating the individuals who presided over this tragedy, we should be pursuing those still being paid by the taxpayer who share responsibility for what went wrong."

Cecilia Hitchen, deputy director of children's services, and Clive Preece, head of children in need and safeguarding services remain suspended while an internal investigation is carried out.

Two social workers involved in the Baby P case, Gillie Christou and Maria Ward, have had their social work registration temporarily suspended.