

# Baby P chief appeals against her sacking

## Shoemith could be in line for six-figure payout

THE council chief sacked from her £100,000-a-year job over the Baby P abuse scandal has launched an appeal, it has emerged.

Sharon Shoemith could be in line for a huge compensation payout if she wins her appeal for unfair dismissal against Haringey Council, employment lawyers said.

Her case is due to be heard by an appeal panel at the Labour-run council this week and sources warned she could be offered a six-figure settlement to avoid a costly and potentially explosive tribunal.

She was dismissed by Haringey last month without any notice payment or compensation after Children's Secretary Ed Balls ordered she should be removed.

A Government-commissioned report highlighted a series of failures within her department, and Haringey said the findings led to 'a fundamental loss of trust and confidence' in Mrs Shoemith, its director of children's services.

She was suspended on full pay for a week while the council took legal advice but experts said Mrs Shoemith, 55, could have a case for unfair dismissal.

Ronnie Fox, of employment law firm

By Vanessa Allen

Fox, said: 'It is a fundamental principle of justice that both sides in an employment dispute must be allowed to have their say.

'If she was not given that chance then she may have a case that the council did not follow due process. Otherwise she could argue that she was not guilty of the kind of gross misconduct which would justify immediate termination without compensation.

'Ed Balls was not her employer, and yet

### **'A fundamental principle of justice'**

Mr Balls appears to have directed that she should not be given any payment, before an investigation was carried out by her employer.'

Payouts for unfair dismissal are capped at £63,000 but Mrs Shoemith may be entitled to damages if she successfully argues that the public outcry over the case has made it impossible for her to find work elsewhere. She could also be awarded up

to a year's pay in lieu of notice. And she will receive a pension pot worth up to £1.5million. The appeal will be heard in private by elected councillors, but if that fails she could take her case to an independent employment tribunal.

Baby P, who cannot be named for legal reasons, was on the council's child protection register and was seen more than 60 times by social workers and health professionals before his death in August 2007.

The 17-month-old suffered countless injuries and his 27-year-old mother, her boyfriend, 32, and their lodger Jason Owen, 36, are all due to be sentenced later this year for causing or allowing his death.

Social workers Maria Ward, Gillie Christou and Sylvia Henry have been removed from their duties while the council investigates their actions in the case.

A paediatrician who saw Baby P two days before his death but failed to spot his horrific injuries, Sabah Al-Zayyat, is facing a General Medical Council investigation.

Mrs Shoemith's deputy, Cecilia Hitchen, and Haringey's head of child safeguarding services, Clive Preece, remain suspended on full pay while an internal investigation continues. Friends of Mrs Shoemith, a mother-of-two, insist she was a scapegoat.