

4 Child Death Reports

Maria Colwell

25.3.65. - 7.1.73

Early in the morning of Sunday, 7 January 1973, Maria Colwell's limp body was delivered to hospital in a white pram. She had been starved and beaten to death by her stepfather, William Kepple.

Maria was the fifth and youngest child of Pauline and Raymond Colwell. She was three months old when her father left home and four months old when he died. Pauline couldn't cope on her own with her five youngsters, so she came to an informal arrangement to give Maria to her aunt and uncle, Doris and Bob Cooper, to look after.

It was a successful agreement that was later to be formalised by East Sussex County Council. Maria was then about 16 months old and was to live happily with her aunt and uncle - whom she came to call "mum and dad" - for five years. Then, for some reason, known only to herself, Pauline decided she wanted Maria back. She made no bid for her other children. By this time she had met and set up home with labourer, William Kepple, and had had three more children.

Maria was about to be delivered to 13 months of misery, neglect and pain which would culminate in her death.

The pathologist who examined her recorded "the worst case of bruising I have seen." She had brain damage, a fractured rib and severe internal injuries. Her stomach was completely empty and she weighed a mere 36lbs. Swelling over her body apparently made her skin half-an-inch thick which disguised the extent of her starvation.

When scene of crime officers visited her home, they found that the door handle had been removed from inside Maria's bedroom. It had been her prison.

In the months leading up to her death, there were 50 official visits to her home - from the NSPCC, the police, school welfare officers, housing officials, social workers and health visitors. None had the complete picture. The inquiry into her death, headed by Thomas Field-Fisher QC, outlined Maria's descent from a thriving six-year-old to her stepfather's punchbag.

Almost immediately, Maria had started running away from the Kepples. Neighbours started noticing that Maria was treated differently from the other Kepple children. Concerned

neighbours rang the authorities. From 20 November 1972, Maria stopped going to school. There were a series of anonymous complaints from neighbours concerned about the bruising seen on Maria.

The inquiry found that Maria was returned to her natural mother on the basis of "insufficient evidence and misapprehension" about their relationship. It was critical of all those concerned with her supervision.

Maria's death at the hands of her stepfather was one of the first to put child abuse under intense public scrutiny since the 1940s. It led to "shock" reports in tabloid newspapers and triggered a huge Department of Health and Social Security Inquiry.

Jasmine Beckford

2.12.79 - 5.7.84

Jasmine Beckford weighed just 23lbs when she died of a savage blow that dislodged her brain. During her brief life Jasmine had suffered leg fractures, broken ribs, burns and cuts - all at the hands of her stepfather Morris Beckford.

For the final months he had kept her chained to a bed in a tiny attic. Her death was finally attributed to brain damage although the pathologist found she had 40 other injuries covering her face and body, including 20 broken bones. Some of the injuries happened in the days before she died on 5 July 1984. Others went back months.

Following their trial at the Old Bailey in spring 1985, Beckford was jailed for ten years for Jasmine's manslaughter while her mother, Beverley Lorrington, was sentenced to 18 months for wilful neglect and cruelty.

The subsequent Panel of Inquiry was chaired by leading barrister Louis Blom-Cooper QC. His six-strong Panel of Inquiry looked into the background of her parents in order to understand how a child could have been put through such physical pain.

Morris Beckford, who was born in Jamaica in June, 1959, arrived in Britain as a nine-year-old with two of his sisters, to be reunited with his parents. By the time he was 13 he had been accused of stealing from his own home and was being beaten by both his parents. After attention by the Police and NSPCC both of his parents were prosecuted for ill-treatment and neglect - the teenage Beckford had been forced to sleep in an outhouse without a bed.

Beckford was sent to a special school where he met fellow pupil Beverly Lorrington. She was born in November 1959 in London. Her mother had deserted the family when Beverley was only six months old.

Beverley later claimed that her childhood was a miserable succession of beatings by both her stepmother and her father.

She began living with Morris Beckford when she was 19 years old and several months pregnant with Jasmine, who was not Beckford's child. Jasmine was born on 2 December 1979 in London and given the name Jasmine Lorrington. Shortly afterwards her birth records were changed at the insistence of Morris Beckford.

Two-and-a-half years later Beverley gave birth to Jasmine's sister, Louise Beckford.

When she was only five months old, Louise was admitted to hospital with a broken arm and eye haemorrhages. Doctors warned that her injuries were non-accidental. Three days later, 18-month-old Jasmine was taken to the same hospital with a broken femur. Jasmine was discharged from hospital after six weeks. Two months later Morris Beckford was found guilty of assaulting Louise, causing actual bodily harm, and given a suspended six-month jail term and a £250 fine.

Five months later, in April 1982, a case conference of professionals in Brent decided that both Jasmine and Louise, who had been with foster parents, should be returned home on a trial basis.

Between April and November 1982, Beverley spasmodically took Jasmine to a day nursery. And between January and June 1983, she attended nursery school - but on increasingly irregular occasions. Her last recorded attendance was 9 September 1983. The couple's third child, Chantelle, was born shortly before Christmas - seven months before Jasmine was to die.

At 5.30pm on 5 July 1984 Jasmine was dead on arrival at hospital.

That day, Lorrington had returned home to find Beckford carrying Jasmine's lifeless body down the stairs. Jasmine had been dead for some time. She had 20 broken bones, including ribs, pelvis and pubic bone. She had cuts, bruises, grazes and cigarette burns over most of her body. She had multiple fractures of her left leg and she was little more than a skeleton through lack of food.

At midnight the following day her parents were charged with her murder. Morris Beckford immediately admitted killing Jasmine.

The postmortem results ran to seven pages and revealed an appalling catalogue of abuse. The pathologist found dozens of injuries sustained through slaps and hard punches only a day or so before her death - including the fatal brain injury. Although she was three feet five inches tall, there was barely an inch of her body that did not carry evidence of injury.

It became clear that, after breaking her leg, Beckford had pinned Jasmine to a bed with body-building weights to stop her moving. He had then stuffed weights into Jasmine's leg warmers in a crude attempt to straighten the damaged limb. When she had cried out in pain he had punched her so hard that he had left knuckle marks on her forehead. His idea of medicine, for a child so obviously in distress, had been to administer rum and water or Guinness.

When he eventually hit her so hard on the head that she died, he had tried to revive her by giving her an electric shock from a piece of flex attached to a plug. When that had failed, he refused to call an ambulance and, instead, loaded her body into his sister-in-law's car to drive her to hospital.

Tyra Henry

8.11.82 - 29.8.84

It was 2.30pm on 29 August 1984 when an anxious young woman rushed into Guy's Hospital, London, with a battered and barely conscious toddler. The woman fled without giving her name, but a note identified the child - inaccurately it transpired - as Julie Miller.

The child was rushed to intensive care, but died some 30 hours later. A postmortem found she had been the victim of dreadful abuse. Her body was covered in 57 human bite marks, some old, most new. According to the pathologist, some were so severe, they looked "as if the child had been picked up by the teeth". There were numerous fingernail scratches and slap-marks. But the fatal injuries were to the young girl's head; a broken skull and damaged brain - probably caused by being thrown across a room.

The child was in fact 21-month-old Tyra Henry. She had been abandoned at the hospital by a terrified aunt.

It soon emerged that Tyra had been on the London Borough of Lambeth's At Risk Register, almost since birth, because her older brother, Tyrone, had sustained severe non-accidental injuries when he was just four months old.

Tyrone had a fractured skull, brain damage, two broken thighs and retinal haemorrhages. He had, evidently, suffered a severe blow to the head and violent and prolonged shaking. He was blinded and suffered severe mental impairment.

There seems little doubt that the man who maimed Tyrone was their father, Andrew Neil. But he escaped conviction for Tyrone's injuries because other people, including the boy's mother, Claudette Henry, were in the flat at the time the baby was hurt and - with no suitable explanation from either parent - it could not be proved beyond doubt that Neil was the perpetrator.

Tyra's death triggered three inquiries - two internal investigations by Lambeth Council, and a third Public Inquiry by a panel of seven experts, headed by Stephen Sedley QC, now an appeal court judge.

It heard how both Andrew Neil and Claudette Henry came from difficult backgrounds. Andrew's mother had walked out, when he was seven, leaving his father struggling to bring up three children, as well as work and pay the bills. By the age of 13, Andrew was truanting and in trouble with the police.

Claudette was one of six children, in a family finding it difficult to cope on her father's income as a labourer and her mother's as a cleaner. By 14, Claudette, too, had all but dropped out of school.

When Claudette was only 15 and Andrew 16, they conceived their first child, Tyrone. At three

months old he was admitted to hospital with "gastric trouble", but Claudette and Andrew also volunteered to medical staff accounts of two "accidents". The first that Tyrone had fallen off the bed when Andrew had left the room; the second that a bath stand had collapsed when Andrew was bathing him. Although Tyrone was admitted to hospital, no suspicions were aroused. Tyrone was discharged on 1 March 1982. Within 24 hours he was back suffering the terrible injuries that were to maim him for life.

Although Andrew Neil was later to be acquitted of causing those injuries, Lambeth Social Services, which had taken Tyrone into care and placed him with foster parents, warned Claudette that it would be a matter of concern if she had any more children with him. However, by this time she was already pregnant with Tyra.

The Inquiry believed that, had two social services files on Andrew and Claudette been dovetailed, alarm-bells over Tyrone's well-being may have been sounded. A file on Andrew Neil recorded a personality disturbance which, at the age of 13, had caused him to kick a two-year-old toddler in the face and hit him with a shoe or belt, causing considerable bruising.

Tyra was placed on the At Risk Register nine days after her birth. She was allowed to continue living with her mother, but placed in the care of her grandmother, Bernadette, on the condition that any association with Andrew Neil would lead to a review. In April 1983 a full care order was made by the court, on the understanding that Tyra would remain with her grandmother.

At this time it appears that Andrew Neil was off the scene. He was serving a prison sentence for robbery.

There were mounting stresses caused by overcrowding and poverty within the Henry household with Bernadette - now widowed - making ever more anxious requests for help. Although there were concerns that Tyra was missing clinic appointments, by the time of her first birthday, welfare workers believed she was thriving. Claudette was applying for council housing for herself and Tyra, away from Bernadette, who continued to care for the baby. Her social worker supported Claudette's moves for independence.

When Andrew was released from prison, he resumed contact with Claudette, though she claimed that she was not seeing him. She was spending increasing numbers of nights away from her mother's, either at a flat, which she was eventually allocated, or at the Neil family home. It is not clear how often she took Tyra with her.

What is clear is that by July 1984, Bernadette was at her wit's end. She was then caring for her own children, as well as two grandchildren, and her electricity supply had been cut off. Perhaps not surprisingly, said the Inquiry, faced with such difficult circumstances, she let her daughter take Tyra to live with her and Andrew. Within a few days he was assaulting both of them. Within a few weeks Tyra was dead.

Eleven months after Tyra's death, Andrew Neil, then aged 20, was jailed for life for her murder. It was, said Judge Robert Lymbery, at the Old Bailey, "an appalling case of cruelty".

Heidi Koseda

16.2.80 - ?/11/84

The body of Heidi Koseda, a little girl not yet five years old, was found decomposing in a cupboard in a west London flat in January 1985, some two months after she died of starvation, thirst and brutal cruelty.

In October 1982, Heidi's father, Henry Koseda, left the family home. Soon afterwards Nicholas Price, who Heidi's mother, Rosemary Koseda, had known at school, moved in. Heidi had no further contact with her father for the rest of her short life.

Psychiatric evidence at her trial supported the observation of Rosemary's mother, Mrs Rickard, that Rosemary was dominated by Price and that her mental state began to deteriorate. In 1983 she gave birth to James, her son by Price. Nicholas Price himself was thought by hospital staff to be unusually disturbed by Rosemary's decision to be admitted to hospital for her confinement.

Rosemary failed to take Heidi to the children's clinic for her three-year check. In all, eight visits were made to the flat by health visitors to persuade her to attend. The last time that Heidi was seen by medical staff was on 5 January 1984 when she accompanied her mother and baby half-brother to the children's clinic for the infant's immunisation.

Rosemary's mother, Mrs Rickard, who was supporting the family financially, saw Heidi at Christmas 1983 and found her reluctant to return home. In the New Year she withdrew her financial support and, in response, Nicholas Price refused to allow her to see Heidi or visit the flat. Mrs Rickard did not see her granddaughter again.

When Rosemary became pregnant again in March neither her mother nor Price's mother were told, and Rosemary withdrew from all contact with her family. The deliberate severance of family ties, avoidance of medical help, coupled with chronic financial trouble must, in the words of the Report, "have contributed to a way of life that was little more than survival... the family seem metaphorically to have raised the drawbridge around their flat".

Efforts by health visitors to keep track of them were foiled when a calling card was returned with "not known" written on it. As the family had previously asserted their intention to move from the area no further attempt was made to contact them.

The only outsiders who saw Heidi from January to July 1984 were neighbours at the block of flats where she lived. She was seen frequently and played with a neighbour's child. She always appeared hungry and bruising to her arms and legs was observed.

Another neighbour who saw the family together around October 1984 noticed heavy bruising covering the whole side of Heidi's body, extending right up to her jaw. He asked what had happened and Rosemary said that Heidi had fallen down stairs.

New neighbours who moved into the flat below Price and Koseda in late August never saw Heidi, but heard persistent banging and crashing all evening, and sometimes into the early hours,

followed by crying or screaming.

By September it appears that Heidi was being confined in the darkened flat - she was seen blinking at the unaccustomed light on a rare occasion when her mother took her out. Very concerned, the downstairs neighbour telephoned the NSPCC on 3 September. The Society alerted a health visitor who called at the flat on 10 September. She did not see Heidi and was told she was asleep in the flat.

During September the health visitor attempted unsuccessfully to make three appointments. Early in October the Koseda family was allocated to a newly-appointed health visitor who was wrongly informed that the family had left Woolacombe Way. Their records were returned to the health authority community service HQ. Heidi's trail, and with it one of her chances of survival, had gone cold.

The nightly banging, screaming and crying continued. The neighbour, convinced that something was very wrong, telephoned the NSPCC again on 10 October, followed by a third call in November. An officer attempted, unsuccessfully, to make a visit. However, he falsified his records, to show a successful visit had been made. He was subsequently sacked for this action.

On 6 December, two midwives and an ambulance man were sent to the flat after a neighbour called to report a baby girl had been born to Rosemary Koseda. There was no heat or light in the flat and the family were all sleeping in the living room. James, aged 15 months, was dressed only in a vest and no other clothes could be found for him. Her parents stated that Heidi was staying with friends. Despite the lack of antenatal care, Lisa Price appeared to be a normal baby and was discharged from hospital five days later.

Between 11 and 13 December, the community midwife visited the flat five times to see Lisa - receiving no reply on each occasion. Mrs Rickard had also unsuccessfully attempted to visit and offer help to her daughter. Health visitors who attempted to visit the family between 17 and 20 December were also unsuccessful. On 21 December, a health visitor referred the case to social services. On Christmas Eve, the health visiting senior nurse spoke to Price on his doorstep. He told her that Rosemary was out with the children and she arranged for a health visitor to call on 27 December. No reply was received to this call. A warrant was then obtained enabling a police inspector, a WPC and a health visitor to enter the flat.

Lisa and James were in the living room, both apparently clean and healthy. Heidi was said to be staying with friends in Hounslow. The parents said the bedroom had been treated with anti-damp chemicals and the room was not entered. Since the warrant applied only to Lisa, the police and health visitor left.

On New Year's Eve, the social worker who had been allocated to the Koseda family visited the flat and found the parents friendly and co-operative. A case conference was scheduled for 22 January 1985. The social worker visited again on 2 and 7 January, on each occasion noticing bruising on James, for which plausible explanations were given. The health visitor called on 3 January. To both visitors Price was studiously vague as to Heidi's precise whereabouts. On 15 January, the social worker visited again. She was getting very worried about Heidi, as Mrs Koseda noticeably avoided the subject when pressed as to why Heidi had not returned.

On 22 January, the worried neighbour alerted the authorities again. A case conference on the Kosedas was held. It was decided to place the names of all three children on the At Risk Register and to ask the police to establish Heidi's whereabouts. The following day, 23 January, police interviewed Price and arrested him on suspicion of murder. The flat was searched, and Heidi's decomposing body was discovered in a cupboard. Both parents were taken into custody, and the two surviving children into care. Upon examination James was found to have bruising incompatible with accidental injury.

It was impossible to say exactly how or when Heidi had died. The best guess made by pathologists was that by 23 January she had been dead for at least two to three weeks, but it was more likely it had been as long as six to eight weeks; which would put her death in early December. The horrifying possibility therefore exists that Heidi was still alive on 6 December, when Lisa was born, or even on 27 December when police visited the flat, but were deterred from entering the bedroom.

Nicholas Price stated at his trial that she was deprived of food and drink from August 1984, at first to punish her for "being greedy". He said she then refused food and finally died at the beginning of November. The prosecution alleged she was confined to the bedroom for several weeks, with the door barred by a broom handle, until she died of starvation.

Nicholas Price was jailed for life for Heidi's murder. Rosemary Kosedas was committed to a mental hospital after admitting manslaughter due to diminished responsibility. The surviving children were put in care and made wards of court.

Kimberley Carlile

3.11.81 - 8.6.86

The death of four-year-old Kimberley Carlile prompted Mr Justice Steyn, who, after a nine-day trial had heard the most appalling evidence of her suffering, to tell the couple responsible: "In the sordid annals of child abuse your crimes are uniquely wicked". He then passed a life sentence on Nigel Hall for her brutal murder and 12 years imprisonment on Pauline Carlile for grievous bodily harm, assault and cruelty.

When Kimberley died on 8 June 1986 she was little more than skin and bone. She was starved, dehydrated, covered in bruises and weighed only 24lbs - half the body weight of a normal child her age.

For the final months of her life she had been kept prisoner in a bedroom at her stepfather's maisonette on an estate in South London. She had become so desperate for food she had eaten her own faeces.

In the final hours of her life she had been tortured with 15 cigarette burns callously administered along her spine. She was then kicked in the head so violently it caused a

haemorrhage under the skull. A postmortem also discovered bruising around her genitals and a scar on her buttocks that had been caused by a red hot instrument.

Neighbours had heard screams and pitiful weeping coming from the bedroom and had telephoned warnings to social workers. Pauline Carlile was later to tell police that, despite her tender age, Kimberley had told her towards the end of her life that all she wanted to do was die.

It was hardly surprising. Her last Christmas - six months before her death - was spent padlocked in her room for "being naughty". She was freezing cold and was given only a sandwich and a glass of water for her Christmas dinner as her brother and two sisters played with their new toys nearby. On one of the coldest days of the year, shortly afterwards, neighbours were astonished to see her outside the home wearing just her vest and knickers.

The Old Bailey jury was satisfied that Hall had inflicted the terrible injuries and rejected Kimberley, apparently because she was a strong-willed child who refused to accept him as her new father. Pauline Carlile, 27 at the time, had defended herself in court by claiming she was afraid that her other three children would be taken from her if she reported Hall's violent abuse of the defenceless child.

Amid the outrage that followed the case, Greenwich social workers were accused of abandoning Kimberley. The Panel of Inquiry set up under barrister Louis Blom-Cooper to investigate the circumstances that surrounded the death of Kimberley Carlile concluded in its 290-page report: "Kimberley Carlile's death was avoidable through the intervention of the welfare agencies".

Kimberley had been born in Birkenhead on 3 November 1981. She was the youngest of Pauline Carlile's then three children. The oldest was a boy of four and Kimberley had a two-year-old sister. When she was only seven months old the Carlile family came to the attention of Wirral Social Services after Pauline complained her first husband was being violent. Together with her children, she went to live at a women's refuge. Two months later Kimberley's natural father died of a cerebral haemorrhage after falling over in the street. But Wirral social workers reported that Pauline Carlile appeared to be coping well as she returned home with the children.

Almost a year later Pauline remarried a man well known to police in the north-west of England as violent and involved in drugs. Social workers warned that the children could be at risk. Pauline subsequently had her jaw broken by her second husband and Kimberley and her brother and sister were taken into voluntary care with foster parents on the Wirral. On Christmas Eve 1984 Pauline Carlile fled to a women's refuge after death threats from her second partner, and met Nigel Hall on a railway station in Liverpool. Their relationship developed and they soon set up home together in Kidbrooke, south-east London.

Later that year Pauline removed the children from foster care - where they had been happy and had thrived - and they moved south to be reunited with their mother at her new home in Kidbrooke. At first all seemed well. Greenwich Social Services was asked to monitor the family because of Pauline's decision to take Kimberley and the other two children out of care and go to live with Hall. They had just had their first child together, Pauline's fourth.

Social services immediately wrote to the Carlile family offering help. Within a week Hall had stormed into the local social services office and warned startled social workers to keep their

noses out of his family affairs. By December neighbours were becoming increasingly disturbed by the distressing sounds coming from the home. Unknown to anyone outside the family, Kimberley was now being locked in her room for hours on end. Her "crimes" were mainly bed wetting and standing up to the bullying Hall.

A month later a health visitor visited the family but was not allowed to see Kimberley. At the same time Pauline Carlile's eldest child, the boy now aged seven, told a teacher that Hall was "throwing him around" at home. The education welfare service alerted Greenwich Social Services, who agreed the family should be closely monitored.

Two months later - and three months before Kimberley died - a woman phoned social services anonymously and told of crying and terrible piercing screams coming from the Carlile flat. Two Greenwich social workers were dispatched to the home but Carlile and Hall refused them access to the children. A team leader decided to go himself but also got no answer. He left a letter warning the couple that if they didn't allow social workers or health visitors to see the family, he would call the police.

Hall reacted to the letter by phoning social services and admitting he was having problems with Kimberley. She was wilful, had fallen down the stairs, was wetting herself and making herself sick, he complained. The next day Hall arrived with the entire family at social services and asked the social worker, "Why is Kimberley so disturbed?" Hall even admitted hitting her and the social worker noted she looked "withdrawn, sallow, pasty and still".

Social services neither required the children to have medical examinations nor asked to see Kimberley without the winter clothing that covered her from head to foot. The bruising underneath remained concealed. Kimberley was allowed to leave the office in the arms of the man who was shortly to kill her.

On 8 June Carlile was doing the washing-up when she heard Hall shout out. She rushed upstairs to find him holding a lifeless Kimberley in his arms. Hall told her she had fallen down the stairs. The subsequent postmortem by Dr Michael Heath made grim reading. He gave the cause of death as "traumatic subdural haemorrhage" due to an injury to the left temple, consistent with a heavy blow - almost certainly a kick. There were numerous bruises all over her body. In fact, she appeared yellow because old bruising suffered at the hands of Hall had faded, leaving widespread discoloration that gave her a jaundiced appearance.

Dr Heath also found three recent injuries around Kimberley's ears. She had been literally lifted off the ground by her ears causing the tissue behind the ears to tear. Her hymen was inflamed together with an inflammation of the opening of the vagina on her vulva. Although the injury suggested sexual interference, it was impossible to prove she had also been sexually abused. The inquiry decided that Kimberley had been abused incessantly for at least nine months before her death.

Karl McGoldrick

1.6.84 - 4.12.86

In the months before he died, two-year-old Karl was taken to hospital three times with injuries inflicted by his mother's sadistic boyfriend. Each time social workers allowed the toddler to return home, despite repeated warnings from his relatives. The fourth time Karl was admitted to the same casualty department, he was to die from a heart attack the day after an emergency operation on his ruptured bowel.

His mother's 23-year-old boyfriend Mark Knowles, who fooled the authorities into thinking he was a charming and caring man, was subsequently arrested and jailed for life for murdering the child. The inquiry that followed reported that a catalogue of warnings had been missed by social workers and health workers.

Karl was born on 1 June 1984 at Whitehaven in Cumbria. Soon after his birth his mother Pauline McGoldrick set up home with Knowles, who hid his bullying and violent streak behind a mild-mannered exterior.

When he was just 15 months of age Karl was admitted to the West Cumberland Hospital in Whitehaven with a torn lip. But there were also telltale signs of abuse. A blister compatible with a cigarette burn was observed on his right wrist, there was a scar on his left shin and a series of bruises on his back and upper arms that should have set the alarm bells ringing. Both a consultant paediatrician and a Cumbrian social worker present felt the injuries might be non-accidental. But Karl was still discharged after overnight observation and allowed home.

A case conference was called a week later to discuss fears that Karl was being "handled roughly" at home. The conference agreed there was cause for professional concern - but not sufficient evidence to put his name on the At Risk Register.

Five weeks later Karl was back at the same hospital with a bruised forehead, a cigarette burn below his left eye and bruises on his legs and body. Crucially, there were even fingertip bruise marks on both sides of his neck. Yet again he was allowed home with his mother to the house where he was being abused by Knowles. A second case conference was arranged and the conclusion reached that the injuries were not deliberately inflicted. Once again, the professionals did not consider there were grounds for Karl to be taken into care and his name was not added to the At Risk Register. This was in spite of the warnings to the police and social workers at that time, from other extended family members, in particular Karl's maternal grandmother, Mary Corlett, that the child was in grave danger.

Less than four months later - in February 1986, when he was a year and eight months old - Karl was once again taken to West Cumberland Hospital. This time he was suffering from a fractured right arm, caused by a twisting injury. He also had bruises to his forehead, neck, back and both legs and burns on his thigh caused by a red-hot poker. McGoldrick and Knowles explained that Karl's broken arm had been caused by a wardrobe toppling onto him accidentally. A Place of Safety Order was obtained and he went to Mary Corlett's home. That order expired less than a month later and he was once again returned to face further abuse at the hands of Mark Knowles.

A third case conference was called to discuss Karl. A Cumbrian detective chief inspector attended and expressed his fears over the number of times Karl had been hospitalised in such a short space of time. It was agreed the police should investigate. Officers interviewed McGoldrick and Knowles and decided that there was no reason to believe that Karl had been the victim of deliberate child abuse. Knowles, it was noted by the police, appeared to be a calm and sensible young man.

Shortly before Christmas 1986 Karl was admitted to hospital for the last time. He had appalling internal injuries and his stomach lining had been torn in two. His body was also covered in no less than 32 bruises. Surgeon Christopher Metcalfe-Gibson, who operated on Karl, said he had seen similar injuries before - after a high-speed road accident when the steering wheel of the car had pierced the abdomen of the driver.

Knowles, who had himself been placed in care and fostered as a child, claimed Karl had simply knocked himself on a chair as Knowles playfully swung the toddler around. In any event, Karl died a day after he was admitted to hospital. Knowles was charged with his murder within hours.

The 87-page report, from the Independent Inquiry set up by former Health Minister Tony Newton, was particularly critical of the paediatrician and the senior social worker involved in the case.

The report concluded: "The corporate judgements of the three case conferences were sadly in error when concluding that Karl's injuries were the result of poor parenting rather than abuse."

Liam Johnson

1.8.84 - 25.12.87

Three-year-old Liam Johnson was killed by his father on Christmas Day 1987. Nightclub bouncer Robert Johnson was jailed for 15 years after the Old Bailey heard he had broken his son's back in 16 places - and then refused to call a doctor.

Liam's injuries, the court was told, which were worse than those of an air crash victim, had been caused when his father shook him in a violent frenzy at their home in Islington, North London.

The Panel of Inquiry set up to carry out the investigation into the Liam Johnson case was headed by barrister Elizabeth Lawson QC. Before probing the circumstances of Liam's appalling death, they delved into the backgrounds of both his parents. Robert Johnson was the sixth of seven children born to deeply religious parents in Sheffield. His childhood was apparently happy, secure and strict. He claimed he had a good relationship with his own father.

He had left school at 16 and started an engineering apprenticeship but was soon made redundant. His mother died around this time. By 18 he had turned to crime. In 1977 he was

convicted of robbery and stealing a car and sent to borstal. He joined the RAF for a brief period but soon left and in June 1979, he was convicted of burglary and criminal damage and sent to borstal again.

Liam's mother was 18 and already working as a prostitute when she met Robert Johnson in Sheffield in 1980. Her own mother had left home when she was only eight months old. She was raised by her father and grandparents. Johnson and Liam's mother moved to London in 1981 at the start of a stormy on-off relationship. Over the next few years she would be badly beaten up by Johnson, who fractured her jaw at one point but she always made excuses for the injuries she received when he regularly lost his temper.

Their first child, Liam's older brother, was born in London on 27 July 1982. Within four months Liam's mother was back working as a prostitute because Johnson refused to look for a job. The Panel of Inquiry would later report: "They lived on her earnings. They needed money for the baby." Johnson continued to have violent outbursts at the numerous homes they shared as they moved around the Islington area.

Their spasmodic relationship continued despite Liam's mother moving back north, to a women's refuge in Sheffield. Around Easter 1984 Johnson began a relationship with another woman. Liam Johnson was born in Sheffield on 1 August 1984. When Liam was four months old his mother took him and his brother back to Islington and tried to renew the relationship with Johnson. The reconciliation failed and mother and boys returned to Sheffield.

At the beginning of June 1986 their mother asked that the boys be adopted because she could not cope. Social workers felt this would be premature and instead placed the children with foster parents. However, on 11 June Liam's mother unexpectedly removed both her sons from their foster home and went straight to London where she dumped Liam and his brother with their father - and left. She was never to see Liam alive again.

Islington Social Services, having been warned by Sheffield that the children were now on their patch, agreed to monitor them.

Johnson then began custody proceedings over his sons. On 27 July, senior social workers from Islington decided not to put the names of Liam and his brother on the at risk register. In October 1986 Johnson's girlfriend found Liam with a swollen and bruised face. The father said he had fallen down stairs. Johnson's view about the children was that his girlfriend was too lenient with the boys and he didn't want them growing up as "cissies".

His unpredictable behaviour was getting worse. He would often lash out at the children and his girlfriend, punching doors and throwing things about the flat. Johnson's girlfriend later said: "He was so powerful that when he smacked his sons he sometimes knocked them off their feet". He had hit them with a belt on occasions. She warned Johnson she was not prepared to lie for him and was going to report his beatings to social workers but she never did.

For a year, despite regular visits by health visitors, nothing appeared wrong to the professionals monitoring Liam and his brother. Small bruises were easily explained as the result of accidents around the home and the girlfriend said nothing.

Johnson's girlfriend eventually packed her bags and left in August 1987 after a final row, when he tore down the curtains, smashed an ashtray through the window and told her he was going to "rip her head off" The boys were now living alone with their father.

On 22 November Liam was taken to hospital with a swollen right thigh. Johnson told the doctors he had fallen on top of Liam accidentally on the stairs. The child was x-rayed and released. Three days later a magistrate granted Johnson custody of Liam. Social workers and health visitors then tried unsuccessfully to see Liam at home throughout December. The door was never answered and the curtains always drawn. On Christmas Day at 8pm Liam was taken to the Whittington Hospital in London following a call to the emergency services. He was already dead. His body was emaciated and he was the victim of terrible injuries.

His spine had been broken with serious damage to his third and fourth vertebrae. He also had fractured ribs. Some of the injuries were thought to be at least three weeks old but a second spinal injury had been caused shortly before his death, probably the result of shaking or slamming the child across the knee. Medical experts revealed Liam was already dying from his first spinal injury when the second occurred.

It was agreed at the subsequent Old Bailey trial that it would have gradually become impossible for Liam to walk because of the progressive damage to his spinal cord. A tragic and vivid picture was painted of the helpless, three-year-old child reduced to crawling around his home in agony. His stomach was empty when he died - his injuries and particularly the callousing around his oesophagus would have made eating virtually impossible.

Johnson claimed in court he had called for help immediately on Christmas Day. Experts all agreed that it was at least six and may be 12 hours after Liam's death before he was brought to hospital. Specialists said they had only seen similar injuries to Liam's in road accidents and plane crashes - where rapid deceleration before impact had caused the spine to fracture. Johnson, who was a six foot tall body-builder and weight trainer, said he had attempted to vault over Liam as he sat at the bottom of the stairs but crashed down on top of him accidentally.

A jury rejected his story and the judge, sentencing him to 15 years, said he had inflicted "terrible and painful" injuries on his son. The Panel of Inquiry said that the health visitors and social workers involved faced major difficulties but: "There was nothing about this case that stood out from hundreds of others".

Sukina

19.9.83 - 6.12.88

Sukina, a child of five, was beaten to death by her father in a "sustained and ferocious attack" at their home in Bristol on 6 December 1988.

The family had been known to social services, health visiting services, schools, GP's, probation service and two voluntary agencies.

Sukina was born on 19 September 1983 and was the eldest child of the mothers' present relationship. The family lived in a multi-racial inner city area of Bristol. Sukina's mother already had two children from previous relationships. Both children - a boy born in 1977 and a girl born in 1980 - were taken into care by Avon County Council.

Sukina's father was himself severely ill treated as a child; his punishments included savage beatings, being tied to a bed, and being forced to stand on one for long periods.

On 22 July 1985, just before her second birthday, Sukina's mother asked Avon Social Services for a place at a day nursery. Her mother, who was about to give birth to another child, was under emotional and physical stress and the family's living conditions were poor.

Two and a half months later, on 4 October 1985 Sukina suffered her first recorded injury when she was taken to a hospital casualty department unable to walk, and suffering from a swollen left leg. She was found to have a spiral mid-shaft fracture of her left femur.

Her parents gave differing explanations including that she had fallen in the garden two days earlier or had tripped over a toy. The event was accepted by professionals as an accident. This was one of five fractures suffered by Sukina and her siblings, each treated by different hospitals, with a child never visiting the same hospital twice.

On 8 September 1986 the mother took Sukina's sister, then just under a year old, to the clinic. The baby had infected burns on right heel, foot and inside thigh. The mother claimed they were caused by boiling water. This explanation was accepted by the GP. During this period, the two children appeared to be mainly in their father's care. A case conference on 27 January 1987 decided to place the children on the At Risk Register following concerns about a number of injuries.

At the beginning of March 1987 Sukina started to attend nursery school. A nursery school teacher recorded but did not pass on to Social Services a comment made on 2 April 1987 by Sukina. The child was unwell and the teacher suggested she should go home but Sukina said she did not want to because "my daddy will beat upon me."

On 4 May 1987, the mother was admitted to hospital and gave birth to a baby son. On 15 June 1987, the day nursery informed the case co-ordinator that Sukina's sister had two linear bruises on her buttocks. The father was informed of the injury's discovery. He reacted angrily, accusing the day nursery staff of "spying" on him. The mother's explanation for the injury - a fall in the garden - was accepted. A new case co-ordinator was appointed in October 1987 and regularly visited the home at agreed times, kept in close touch with the child's day nursery, Sukina's nursery school, and her brothers health visitor.

Around 22/23 February 1988, the father made a violent attack on Sukina's mother cutting off her hair and beating her. She left home early the following morning. Pregnant once again, and badly frightened by his violence, she asked for the children to be taken into care while she recovered from the attack and terminated the pregnancy. The father agreed to the children going into temporary care. By the end of the month mother had returned home, and so did the children.

A case conference review on 19 May 1988 unanimously recommended the removal of the children from the At Risk Register as "the level of progress established in February has been maintained throughout the subsequent months". However the conference did not consider the brutal details of the assault only that there had been fewer incidents of violence. But within days of this decision Sukina was taken to hospital with a broken right arm. Her mother explained that she had fallen while jumping up and down on a sofa.

On 24 November 1988, the health visitor saw the father at home to investigate the children's absence from school and nursery. He said his children could learn as well at home and complained again of being "spied on" by nursery and school staff.

On 6 December 1988, the father murdered his daughter Sukina. The circumstances were horrific. The incident began with the father asking Sukina and her sister to spell their names which they would not, or could not, do. When the request was repeated, both girls still did not respond. The father then hit Sukina on the hand with a ruler repeatedly, asking her to spell her name. Sukina still did not do so, but her younger sister spelled her own name.

Sukina never did spell her name as her father requested and, as each demand was not met with the response the father wanted, the attack escalated. She was beaten first with the ruler, then with a short length of rigid plastic tubing and finally with a length of kettle flex which had the kettle attachment on one end, but not the three pin plug. We do not know how long the attack lasted, but at least fifty blows were rained upon her, interspersed with repeated demands that she spell her name. Sukina, at one stage, when she was too weak to stand, tried to crawl out of the room to the stairs, asking her father to stop hitting her.

Sukina's mother tried to intervene and was herself assaulted, causing injuries to her face which required a hospital examination. The attack on Sukina however continued until she was barely conscious, at which point she was taken, by her parents, to the bathroom and placed in a bath of warm water in an attempt to revive her. At one point whilst lying in the bath, Sukina tried to lift herself from the lying position but was unable to do so. As she slipped into unconsciousness, Sukina told her father she was sorry. Although an ambulance was called, Sukina was already dead on arrival at the hospital.

The father was convicted of murder and received a mandatory life sentence. He also received a six-month concurrent sentence for assaulting his wife.

Daniel Vergauwen

23.3.84 - 8.9.89

On 17 August 1986 Daniel, just two years old, was taken to Queen Elizabeth Hospital in East London after his mother had punched him and forcibly dragged him along the road. At the hospital, the toddler was found to have extensive bruising to the neck, back, and