

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE**  
**QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION**

**Claim No. HD09D04958**

**BETWEEN:-**

**SYLVIA HENRY**

**Claimant**

**- and -**

**NEWS GROUP NEWSPAPERS LIMITED**

**Defendant**

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**STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT**

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**Solicitor for the Claimant (Daniel Taylor, Taylor Hampton Solicitors):** My Lord, I appear for the Claimant in this action, Ms Sylvia Henry. My friend, Mr Beabey, appears for the Defendant, News Group Newspapers Limited, the publisher of The Sun newspaper and that newspaper's online edition.

My Lord, Ms Henry has been a social worker in the London borough of Haringey for some 23 years and her entire working life, first while a student and then as a qualified professional. For the majority of that time she has worked in what can be termed the "front line", working with families and children in need and at risk. She is intensely proud of the work that social workers do to support and protect families and children. She has always worked hard to do the very best she could for families and children in Haringey.

In December 2006 Ms Henry was the Team manager of the Referral and Assessment Team at Haringey social services working from its North Tottenham offices. On 11 December 2006 a 9-month-old boy called Peter Connelly was referred to her team by the Whittington Hospital, where he had been taken by his mother with an injury to his head. The doctors had found evidence of other injuries to Peter for which no convincing, innocent explanation had been given and which were highly suggestive that he had been physically abused.

For the next six weeks, until the end of January 2007 when Peter's case transferred to Haringey's Long Term Safeguarding Team, investigating and ensuring the protection and care of Peter and of his siblings was the responsibility of Ms Henry and her team.

Tragically, six months later, in August 2007 Peter died. In what was to become the notorious case of "Baby P", it would emerge that he had been horrifically beaten and abused before finally being killed, by his mother, Tracey Connelly, or by her boyfriend, a man called Steven Barker, or his brother, one Jason Owen.

On 11 November 2008 the trial of Tracey Connelly, Steven Barker and Jason Owen concluded in their conviction for causing Peter's death.

On 13 November 2008 The Sun began in the newspaper and in its online edition a campaign called "Justice for Baby P". It called for the immediate sacking and barring from any future work with children of those at Haringey social services it alleged were responsible for Peter's appalling death.

The campaign consisted of news articles on a daily basis and occasional editorials, coupled with a petition in the paper and on the website that readers were asked to sign and submit, calling for the dismissal and barring from work with children of those it alleged carried responsibility. The petition would ultimately recruit 1.6 million signatures.

Ms Henry was one of those identified by The Sun. Over a period of four months, Ms Henry was named and referred to in a very large number of articles, as well as in the petition.

In various ways, by those articles The Sun said: that Ms Henry had been grossly negligent in her handling of Peter Connelly's case; that she was thereby to blame for his appalling abuse and death; that she had shown no remorse for these failings; that she was shameless and had ducked responsibility for Peter's death; and that she was a lazy social worker who had generally shown an uncaring disregard for the safety of children, even in cases where they obviously required urgent protection.

The Sun also referred to Ms Henry being involved in the tragic case of Victoria Climbié, an 8-year-old girl who had also been cruelly abused and killed by her carers, an aunt and her boyfriend, in Haringey some 8 years previously. It accused Ms Henry of lying to the inquiry into that case conducted by Lord Laming and of trying to avoid criticism for alleged failures by her in that case.

My Lord, as my Friend will confirm, The Sun is here today to acknowledge that, however sincere and well intentioned its campaign, Ms Henry should never have been one of its targets.

My Lord, The Sun unreservedly accepts that there is no justification for any of the allegations about Ms Henry to which I have referred.

The Sun accepts that Ms Henry was not at fault or to blame in any way for anything done by Haringey social services that may have contributed to Peter's terrible abuse and death. They accept that she did her very best for Peter and particularly that she made repeated efforts to have him kept safe by being placed in foster care rather than being returned to the care of his mother.

My Lord, The Sun has agreed to publish in the newspaper and by its online edition its unreserved apology to Ms Henry for the distress that she has been caused. By their solicitor, they repeat that apology to her before you in this court today.

Obviously, The Sun has undertaken to Ms Henry that it will not repeat any of the allegations made against her. It will compensate her and will pay her legal costs.

**Solicitor for the Defendant (Ben Beabey, Farrer & Co):** On behalf of the Defendant I confirm all that has been said by the Solicitor for the Claimant. The Sun fully accepts that the Claimant played no part and bears no responsibility for the circumstances surrounding the death of Peter Connelly and that she did her best for him. The Sun apologises to Ms Henry.

**Solicitor for the Claimant:** My Lord, it only remains for me to ask your leave to withdraw the record.

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Taylor Hampton Solicitors Limited  
218 Strand  
London WC2R 1AT

Tel: 020 7427 5977

Fax: 020 7353 1238

e-mail: james.heath@thlaw.co.uk