

Investigation name:	<b>Zamzam Ture (death of Shukri Yahya Abdi)</b>
IOPC reference:	2019/122133

## > Summary of IOPC conclusions

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A summary of our conclusions and our rationale is set out below.

- > **Complaint a) – The investigating officers conducted an investigation that was not thorough and prematurely concluded the circumstances surrounding the death of Shukri were not suspicious**
  - > **Complaint b) – The investigating officers continued to say the death of Shukri was not suspicious without having gathered evidence from witnesses who were present at the location of Shukri’s death or witnesses at Broad Oak Sports College who may have had evidence of bullying**
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### > Summary of rationale

The report sets out that officers attended the River Irwell approximately three minutes after receiving a call informing them of a possible drowning. Witnesses were spoken to at the scene, and they were identified as four children who were with Shukri at the time, and four members of the public who had been fishing nearby. Officers activated their body-worn video (BWV) and this showed that they asked questions of those present and obtained accounts of what they had seen. The four children subsequently attended Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interviews, and one of the members of the public provided a witness statement. This demonstrates that GMP made enquiries as soon as they were able to, with eye witnesses who were with Shukri when she went into the water, and those who witnessed the immediate aftermath. We would expect to see this as part of any investigation into an incident of this nature.

As well as speaking to witnesses at the scene, other actions as detailed in the investigator’s report, included deploying DI K as the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO), liaising with the ambulance and fire services, and utilising specialist GMP services including the underwater search team and Crime Scene Investigators (CSIs).

Once Shukri's body had been found and photographed, DI K returned to the police station in order to set a number of actions, which are detailed at paragraph 67 of the investigator's report.

DI K also concluded in a report that, based on the evidence at that time, there was no evidence of anything suspicious. This was in accordance with national policies in relation to investigating the death of children, which sets out that the investigating officer should make an early assessment as to whether there are any suspicious factors. However, unbeknown to DI K, at this time, the officer who attended Zamzam's address in relation to the missing from home report, had obtained information from Shukri's family that she may have been pushed into the water. This was because it was their belief that Shukri would never have gone near the water herself as she could not swim. This is information that DI K clearly could not have factored into his early assessment as he was not aware of it at the time he made his assessment.

Even without knowing the details of the family's concerns, DI K continued with enquiries into the circumstances surrounding Shukri's death, including tasking an officer to attend Shukri's school. In the meantime, Shukri's family released a statement to the press saying that they believed Shukri had been pushed into the water by bullies. DI K appears to have acted upon this information quickly and asked the officer at the school to make enquiries about any bullying allegations, which he did. DI K also raised the matter of bullying during a multi-agency meeting as, in accordance with national policies, DI K was under an obligation to undertake a multi-agency approach to his investigation. This demonstrates that DI K was still gathering information and remained open-minded as to whether there could have been any suspicious circumstances.

Following the Home-Office post-mortem on 1 July 2019, DI K appropriately reviewed his conclusions and his opinion remained the same – that there were no suspicious circumstances. There was nothing found in the post-mortem to suggest that Shukri's death involved another person. He did, however, recognise that it was important to continue to investigate anything else that arose. This is in accordance with GMP's policy on investigating child deaths, which refers to officers keeping an open mind (see paragraph 17 of the investigator's report). This is good practice for all SIOs as, if any evidence were to come to light at a later date, the SIO would be expected to review it accordingly and consider whether it changes their opinion.

It was clear that, despite his initial conclusions of there being nothing suspicious, DI K continued to investigate the circumstances of Shukri's death. During a meeting with Zamzam and Abdirahman on 16 July 2019, he agreed to speak with Child 1, Child 2 and Mr A, after they had raised concerns about what the CCTV footage showed prior to Shukri going to the river. This shows that DI K was still considering pursuing lines of enquiry two and a half weeks after the incident, and that he had not stopped investigating the matter after four days.

We were satisfied that, by the SIO agreeing to pursue such further lines of enquiry, he was demonstrating his commitment to the family's needs as well as conducting a thorough investigation.

Given the information available, it appears that DI K continually assessed the evidence being gathered in order to determine whether there were any suspicious circumstances surrounding Shukri's death. He followed a number of lines of enquiry appropriately, including speaking with the four children present when Shukri died, and obtaining information from the school in relation to allegations that Shukri was being bullied. Paragraph 20 of the investigator's report sets out the common principles that those investigating child death should consider. We were satisfied that there was evidence that DI K demonstrated that he adhered to these principles in the actions that he undertook during the investigation.

DI K followed guidance that states that officers should take a view on whether a death is suspicious early on in an enquiry, however, he clearly kept this under review and followed lines of enquiry. The fact that his view did not change, does not suggest that the investigation was not thoroughly carried out. Therefore, on the basis of the evidence collated during the investigation, and in light of the points set out above, it was our opinion that the complaint that GMP did not thoroughly investigate the circumstances of the incident and prematurely concluded Shukri's death was not suspicious was **not upheld**.

We also saw evidence that relevant witnesses were spoken to both in the immediate aftermath of these tragic events, and at appropriate points in the investigation. Evidence was also gathered from Shukri's school and enquiries were made regarding the allegations of bullying.

Therefore on the basis of the evidence it was our opinion that the complaint that the investigating officers continued to say the death of Shukri was not suspicious without having gathered evidence from witnesses who were present at the location of Shukri's death or witnesses at Broad Oak Sports College who may have had evidence of bullying was **not upheld**.

> **Complaint c – The investigating officers misled Zamzam and her family when they said they had spoken with Broad Oak Sports College about Shukri but had not**

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> **Summary of rationale**

As detailed in our rationale above, DI K tasked an officer to attend Shukri's school the day after she died. We were satisfied this was an appropriate action to set and was clearly done with the mindset that important evidence could be gathered in order to determine whether there was any third party involvement.

The investigator's report details the actions taken by PC G, who attended the school, which included speaking with Child 1 and Child 2, attending a school assembly, and speaking with staff there. While there, PC G was provided with information about bullying, and he duly acted upon this by speaking with staff at the school in order to establish what records the school had of Shukri being bullied. This showed one instance of bullying that occurred on 17 June 2019, and DI K was updated with this information. Minutes from the multi-agency meeting that DI K attended, in which the assistant head teacher of the school was present, confirmed this incident was the only one recorded.

It is unclear when Zamzam and Abdirahman believe they were informed by DI K that GMP had spoken with Shukri's school, and there was insufficient evidence to show that DI K informed the family of this. In any case, the evidence available shows that GMP did in fact speak with pupils and staff at the school, and that they did this promptly, i.e. the day after Shukri's death.

Therefore, on the basis of the evidence collated during the investigation, it was our opinion that the complaint that GMP informed the family they spoke with the school when they had not was **not upheld**.

> **Complaint d – GMP prematurely published statements giving the impression that this tragedy occurred as a result of warm weather and not due to the actions of those present with Shukri at the time of her death.**

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> **Summary of rationale**

As already detailed, DI K formed an early opinion that Shukri's death was not suspicious, and we were satisfied that DI K considered all the evidence available to him at the time in order to make this determination. One of the early actions he set was to engage with the media. As a result, a press release was drafted and sent to DI K on the morning after the incident, the content of which is detailed in the investigator's report at paragraph 149. This was approved by DI K. We considered the content of the press release below.

The press release made reference to there being "*no suspicious circumstances at this time*". This seems to be an accurate statement to make, given that at that time there

had been no evidence to indicate otherwise. The press release made it clear that this was the view “*at this time*”, which clearly left the matter open should any further evidence come to light later that would change DI K’s assessment.

The press release also made reference to the weather being warm and reminded everyone of the dangers of going into the water to cool off, or playing near rivers, lakes and reservoirs. While the press release did not explicitly link Shukri’s death to the warm weather or playing near water, it is understandable that Zamzam and Abdirahman may have thought that it was implied. However, when taken in context, it is clear that it had been a warm day on the day of Shukri’s death, and also that other agencies (i.e. the school and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service) recognised the need to warn people of the danger of going near open water.

HM Government’s guidance on Working Together to Safeguard Children, the Greater Manchester procedure for the management of sudden unexpected deaths in Childhood, HM Governments statutory and operational guidance for child death reviews and the Royal College of Pathologists and Child Health guidance on sudden unexpected death in childhood all place a positive obligation on authorities to promote the safety and welfare of other potentially vulnerable children.

In relation to linking Shukri’s death to two men dying in the sea, GMP’s press release did not contain this information. It appears that the BBC and Sky News made their own decisions to include this information. GMP cannot regulate what information the media include within their news stories and, as such, there was nothing to suggest that GMP made these links themselves.

Given this, there was insufficient evidence to indicate that the press release contained inaccurate information, either in relation to there being no suspicious circumstances at that time or that Shukri’s death was as a result of warm weather.

Therefore, on the basis of the evidence collated during the investigation, it was our opinion that the complaint that GMP prematurely published statements giving the impression that this tragedy occurred as a result of warm weather and not due to the actions of those present with Shukri at the time of her death was **not upheld**.

## > **Complaint e – The investigating officers treated Zamzam Arab Ture and her family less favourably because of their ethnic background**

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### > **Summary of rationale**

In her statement of complaint, Zamzam made it clear that she believed her complaints and concerns were not taken seriously or given sufficient weight due to her ethnic

background and English being her second language. Abdirahman stated that he believed DI K spoke in a loud voice during a meeting on 16 July 2019, and that this was either due to DI K being unhappy at having to investigate the matter or his belief that by shouting at people whose first language isn't English and from BAME backgrounds they were more likely to understand what he was saying. Abdirahman stated that, if this was the case, he perceived this to be a form of racism or of having a mindset or methodology of speaking to BAME community members in that way, and he believed it to be highly inappropriate.

It is clear that Zamzam and Abdirahman have been affected by GMP's interactions with them, and their confidence in GMP has been diminished due to their perception of the way in which they have been treated.

The investigator's report sets out the actions that were taken by GMP in response to Zamzam's report of Shukri being missing from home, including utilising translation services and deploying a Muslim Family Liaison Officer (FLO). DI K has provided some explanation within his statement to the IOPC, which indicates that he does not believe he treated Zamzam and Abdirahman less favourably due to their ethnic background. He stated that, in fact, GMP had undertaken actions over and above the usual ones in order to reassure the family. For instance, the officer who attended the initial report of Shukri being missing from home recognised that English wasn't Zamzam's first language and utilised language line in order to assist. We did not believe this was an action over and above the norm, as we would expect this to occur during any attendance where there are language barriers in order to obtain the necessary information. Having said that, we were satisfied that this was an appropriate course of action in order to overcome the language barrier and assist the family in making sure the police understood their concerns.

DI K said he also deployed a Muslim Family Liaison Officer (FLO) after the family had requested an officer who was more representative of their culture. Again, we would expect officers to consider cultural background when deploying an FLO during an investigation.

In addition, the investigator's report refers to meetings with Zamzam and members of the Somalian Community and Independent Advisory Group (IAG) in order to provide reassurance, as well as GMP working with local mosques and councillors in the area. We believed this showed that GMP were taking the matters seriously and maintained consideration of how the matter may be affecting the wider community.

In relation to the meeting between DI K and Abdirahman on 16 July 2019, DI K said that there was a "*heated debate in relation to what the direction of the investigation should be.*" However, he denied shouting or being disrespectful towards Abdirahman or Mr Malik. It is difficult to establish the full nature of the conversation as there is no independent evidence, such as a recording of the meeting, to show it, therefore, we were reliant upon the witness statements from both DI K and Abdirahman. There is no doubt that Abdirahman believed DI K raised his voice at him and he gives two possible causes for the reasons why – either it was because of Abdirahman's ethnic

background or it was due to DI K being unhappy at having to investigate the matter. DI K refers to a heated debate within his account, which in our opinion, means that there was a two-way exchange possibly involving raised voices. DI K's explanation for this was that it was in relation to the direction of the investigation, as Abdirahman had focused on one section of the CCTV they had been watching and was asking why DI K hadn't questioned any of the children involved. As a result of this discussion, DI K agreed to take further statements from the children. This appears to have been an appropriate response to the concerns Abdirahman was raising.

Considering all of the evidence, on the balance of probabilities, it is more likely than not that DI K raised his voice and spoke loudly. While we were not able to fully determine the reasons why DI K raised his voice, we were satisfied that the investigative actions he took as a result of the discussion in the meeting did not indicate Abdirahman was treated any less favourably due to his ethnic background.

Having said that, it was clear that Abdirahman's perception of the meeting was that DI K could have been raising his voice due to his ethnic background. As such, it was our view that DI K should reflect upon his actions during the meeting with Abdirahman, and consider how raising his voice could be perceived by those who do not have English as their first language and/or from BAME backgrounds.

Having considered the complaint and the investigator's report, it appears the main reasons why Zamzam and Abdirahman believe they were treated less favourably due to their ethnicity was due to the fact that the investigation was not conducted thoroughly, and prematurely decided there were no suspicious circumstances. As we already concluded earlier in this document, there was insufficient evidence to suggest that GMP did not conduct a thorough investigation and we were satisfied that it was carried out in line with national and local policies and procedures. As a result, there was insufficient evidence to conclude that Zamzam and Abdirahman were treated less favourably than anyone else who does not possess the same ethnic background. We would expect any investigation into similar circumstances to have been conducted in the same manner.

Therefore, on the basis of the evidence collated during the investigation, it was our opinion that the complaint that Zamzam and her family were treated less favourably due to their ethnic background was **not upheld**.