

Down's boy, 4, dies after social workers take him away from parents

By **Vanessa Allen**
and **Luke Salkeld**

A BOY of four died in a foster home after social workers removed him from his parents.

Jonas Stadden, who had Down's syndrome, collapsed and died after he was taken into care by a council criticised for its 'inadequate' child protection services.

His devastated parents say they had repeatedly raised questions about his standard of care, but claim their fears were dismissed.

Jonas's mother Sara Russell, 47, said: 'Jonas could have been saved if anyone had listened to us, his parents. Every time we tried to tell them something was wrong we were ignored.'

'They've killed our little boy by not listening to what we said.'

Jonas was taken into care in April last year after his mother contacted social services at Somerset council about an unrelated matter.

The full details cannot be reported but Miss Russell said she was told the interim care order was temporary and would mean the council

would still have to consult her over her son's care. A source at the council confirmed that Jonas was in good health when he was taken from his parents.

Two months later an Ofsted inspection of Somerset's child protection service judged it to be 'inadequate'.

And a month before Jonas's death, his parents went to court in an unsuccessful bid to have him removed from his foster placement.

They felt he was not receiving proper medication for sores, bruises and sunburn. The couple, from Taunton, also complained that he was left in soiled nappies, was not properly dressed in winter and was allowed to sleep alone despite suffering breathing problems.

His father Haydn Stadden, 48, claimed that the last time he saw Jonas, in November last year, he was hot, flushed, lethargic and suffering from conjunctivitis. Mr Stadden said he was assured his son would get

medical attention. But just four days later, Jonas collapsed at his foster home. An ambulance was called but paramedics were unable to save him.

Miss Russell was told he had died when four police officers arrived at the couple's home, but was not allowed to see her son's body until the next day.

She told the Daily Mail: 'If someone had contacted us, we might have been able to see him

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Stadden:
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before he died and hold him for the last time. He might have known his Mummy and Daddy were with him.'

A council spokesman said the case was 'complex', adding: 'We have complete confidence in the foster carers who looked after him.' Jonas's death is still under investigation and the results of a post-mortem examination are expected next month.

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