

Follow-up and safeguarding after serious incidents





INVESTIGATION FOLLOWING THE TRAGIC DROWNING IN TROMSØ

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In accordance with the act relating to health and social contingency (74) and the regulations relating to contingency planning, (75) the local authorities must have a contingency plan in place for how to manage crises and disasters. After the incident, the local authority mobilised crisis staff in line with the local authority's contingency plan. This is a time-limited measure. The primary task of the crisis staff was to deal with the authorities and the media. The staff also investigated whether appropriate services had been provided to the family. No irregularities were found.

A serious incident such as the one that took place in Tromsø primarily affects the family. However, the immediate network and acquaintances of those involved, local authority employees and the local community were also strongly affected.

Adam did not feel that anyone from the local authority safeguarded him after the tragedy.

Local authority employees also noted that there was a lack of systematic crisis management and follow-up. Several of them said that the interview with NHIB was the first opportunity they had had to talk about their own experiences. They were concerned that other affected parties might also not have received adequate support in the period following the tragedy. Some stated that several other refugees experienced strong reactions. This included fellow students at the adult learning service.

The local authority's psychosocial crisis team was part of the mobilisation effort and the team was in contact with some of the affected services.

NHIB's assessment:

- There is a risk that not everyone who is affected by an incident will be safeguarded by the local authority.
- There is a risk that employees are not safeguarded.

According to the Norwegian Directorate of Health's guide for psychosocial initiatives in the event of crises, accidents and disasters, (76) psychosocial crisis teams will be responsible for early intervention in connection with psychosocial follow-up. The crisis teams will also contribute to ensuring that affected individuals, families and local communities are offered proper psychosocial follow-up and support from the regular services after critical incidents.

Proper safeguarding also has an impact on the safety of employees and therefore also the quality of the service. Follow-up is part of the health and social care services' duty of care. The local authorities have great freedom in how to organise and accommodate such follow-up.

In Tromsø, the psychosocial crisis team scheme is a voluntary scheme. Capacity and response times may therefore vary and it is not guaranteed that everyone who needs the service will be able to access it. Informants give us the impression that employees, managers and staff have different understandings of who is responsible for safeguarding affected parties and the scope of such responsibility.

NHIB's assessment:

- There is a risk that local authorities will fail to ensure follow-up at all levels within their own organisation in the crisis management of very serious incidents.

It is important to reach those who are directly and indirectly involved, as well as non-employees, such as GPs. The municipal management team was keen to discover any failures in the services received by Sarah. The crisis management and subsequent follow-up have not been evaluated by the local authority.

One of the mosques in Tromsø invited various agencies to participate in dialogue after the incident. NHIB considers this to be an important initiative, even though it did not lead to specific follow-up measures.

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