

7-minute Learning Summary

Safeguarding Adult Review – Simon




Case Summary

Simon was a 54-year-old white British man who had a history of alcohol and physical health problems, associated with sustained alcohol use and a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia. Simon was known to the Recovery and Support Service and was seen at home by the service for monthly injections of prescribed antipsychotic medication. Simon was not recorded by professionals as having a learning disability, but his sister told the SAR reviewers he had attended a special school and had a severe learning disability; he was also illiterate. Simon had experienced many traumas in his life, including the loss of his grandparents with whom he had lived and following admission to intensive care in 2016 due to his chronic liver disease. Simon's sister and his nephews had moved in with him so they could support him.

Simon accessed his general practitioner (GP), when prompted to do so by his sister, but then did not attend hospital appointments for urgent assessment and treatment when referrals were made for him in November 2022. He was articulate and charismatic and professionals seeing him considered he had mental capacity and so his refusal to accept care was deemed to be an unwise decision and/or self-neglect. There did not seem to be consideration of his traumas when he was not engaging, and professionals did not seem to see him beyond his alcohol dependency.

Summary findings

1. Assessing Mental Capacity – Why are mental capacity assessments still not being routinely conducted in a time and decision specific way across health and social care agencies in Richmond? This means cognitive impairments linked to chronic alcohol dependency can be overlooked, even when the need for medical intervention is acute. 
2. Discriminatory Abuse – Research shows that individuals with alcohol dependency who are not homeless are often overlooked culturally and organisationally, resulting in inadvertent discriminatory practice. Although unintentional, this increases the likelihood that their rights to health and care support are not fulfilled in Richmond, they do not get the right safeguarding response for self-neglecting behaviours and their loved ones and carers are not listened to or supported.
3. Communication Tools – Available tools to support communication across professionals and teams about clinical deterioration in adults, are not being used in Richmond. This increases the likelihood that the severity of a person's condition is not recognised, and hospital admissions are too late.
4. Management – There is a lack of awareness by professionals working in Richmond that the existing palliative care pathway includes patients with a non-malignant diagnosis, such as end stage liver disease or heart failure. This means people with chronic alcohol dependencies (and their families) may not benefit from palliative care services or support to die with dignity.

Lessons

1. Ask all statutory organisations to provide evidence on how they ensure Mental Capacity Act training is embedded in practice.
2. Promote best practice in Mental Capacity Assessments.
3. Audit of Carers Assessments for carers of people with substance misuse/alcohol dependency, to ensure they are robust and convey the voice of the carer with clarity and attention.
4. Audit safeguarding referrals related to people with alcohol dependencies which are closed after initial screening, to get assurance of sufficient managerial oversight.
5. Seek assurance that the housing provider follow their overcrowding policy.
6. Mental Health Trust has provided assurance that the NEWS2 tool is used across health to support clinicians in accessing timely care, support and transfer for patients who are seriously ill.
7. SAB and ICB to raise the profile with GPs and other health and social care professionals of the palliative care pathway and ensure they are aware it applies to cases with non-malignant diagnosis including those with terminal conditions following substance misuse such as liver disease. 