

Lillian - Safeguarding Adults Review

This 7 Minute Briefing is to provide insight into a recent Safeguarding Adults review concerning the tragic passing of Lillian. This aims to highlight the key findings and recommendations to advocate for impactful measures to prevent similar occurrences in the future. Her daughter has asked that Lillian's first name be used in her memory therefore the SAR has not been anonymised.

Background:

Lillian was a woman of black Caribbean ethnicity, aged 74 when she passed. She experienced significant challenges including struggles with mental and physical health, disengagement from support services, and barriers to accessing appropriate care. Lillian had 2 adult children but lived alone in a small crowded one bedroom flat. Her daughter reported her missing to the police but was not found until the third search to her home where she was noticeably deceased for some time on her kitchen floor. Lillian's cause of death was recorded as unascertained due to advanced decomposition.

Lillian's journey underscores the importance of understanding lived experiences to shape our response to safeguarding concerns. This briefing highlights the importance of understanding diverse needs, enhancing support systems, and fostering collaboration to better serve vulnerable individuals within a diverse community.

Actions from Recommendation

- **Improve Safeguarding Awareness:** Multi Agency Self Neglect Policy drafted and hoarding focused work is underway – led by Self Neglect Sub Group within NSAB.
- **Benefits of Diversity in Teams:** Promoting the importance of diverse practitioners and developing diverse leaders within the local authority.
- **Improve Missing Persons Protocol:** Metropolitan Police have implemented systemic search for lone adults reported missing.
- **Recognition of Vulnerable Adults by Healthcare Providers:** GP maintaining Vulnerable Adults list with administrative team to escalate when no response.
- **Managing Patients with Engagement Challenges:** ELFT reduce gaps in discharge decision making perimeters.
- **Cultural Competency Toolkit:** LBN ASC and ELFT have commissioned Cultural Curiosity training for all staff.

Collaborative Approach from Agencies Involved

It is paramount for enhance collaboration with housing, adult social care, and other key agencies to appropriately address issues of hoarding and self-neglect effectively. Proactive measures, such as improved responses to missing persons cases and enhanced collaboration among relevant agencies are essential to safeguard vulnerable individuals. In particular, the review suggested the need to improve measures of banking institutions to be able to provide intelligence to support police investigations with transaction analysis for missing persons.

Intersectionality and Access to Support Services

The review revealed that due to the need to improve services in managing unique intersectional experiences—such as those related to gender, age, race, mental health, and physical needs. Individuals with these protected characteristics may encounter significant barriers. This need for improvement can hinder access to services and foster distrust, resulting in reduced engagement. The review also highlighted the importance of diverse teams in providing comprehensive support and understanding to a broad range of individuals.

Challenges in Engagement for those with complex needs

Lillian faced significant obstacles in engaging with support services, resulting in barriers to receiving adequate support to best suit her mental health, physical and complex needs. The prolonged disengagement highlights systemic gaps and missed opportunities by agencies involved that can be used as a tool for learning to promote equal access to early intervention and support for those in need. Introducing a toolkit to enhance professionals' understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds and belief systems, can help to foster trust and engagement.

Trauma-Informed Approach in Patient Management

Adopting a trauma-informed approach is paramount in understanding the root causes behind disengagement. By acknowledging and addressing underlying trauma, we can provide more compassionate and effective patient management, build trust and collaboration. Overall, addressing barriers in mental health diagnosis and long-standing patterns of disengagement through trauma-informed practice can help to facilitate better patient management.

Mental Capacity Assessment and Best Interest Decisions

Robust mental capacity assessments are required to avoid presuming capacity when someone chooses to disengage. It is essential to strike a balance between autonomy and risk management, particularly for individuals who may lack capacity to make decisions for themselves. Strengthening the process of making best interest decisions for individuals lacking capacity, ensures that their rights and well-being are upheld.

Safeguarding Concerns and Hoarding Behaviour

Hoarding behaviours and signs of self-neglect require a multidisciplinary approach. Collaboration among healthcare providers, social services, and housing agencies is key to addressing these complex issues effectively. By the time Lillian had passed she was known to NHS, GP, and Adult Social Care, Occupational Therapy, Housing, Police and Advocacy services. However no safeguarding concerns were raised and she continued to live in poor conditions without adequate support to appropriately meet her needs. It is important to gain an understanding of the presenting safeguarding issues, particularly regarding hoarding behaviours, to help improve risk assessment protocols for fire safety.

