



Safeguarding Adults Review in respect of Tom learning briefing

About Tom

At the time of publication of this briefing, Tom is 41 years of age and refuses to be defined by his disabilities. He has a diagnosis of cerebral palsy, complex postural needs, and has a sight impairment. Tom requires a carer to be available 24 hours a day and uses a motorised wheelchair at all times.

Prior to 2016, Tom enjoyed a full and varied life, including socialising with his friends, playing computer games, and was the Chairperson for the local members group, assisting in compiling computer information for the group. After six months in this role, Tom also started to attend the local SCOPE as a member.

Tom is currently living in his own accommodation in Chichester, after living in an emergency place of safety, a residential care service, since August 2020. Prior to his move, Tom lived in the community with his now ex-wife and his live-in carer. The carer was paid to support Tom with all his care and support needs and was sourced from a care agency. Funding for this care was through a direct payment.

Circumstances leading to the review

From 2016, Tom began to experience neglect and emotional/psychological abuse by his then wife, and paid carer. The abuse and neglect became significantly worse over time, and Tom became isolated from his family and friends. In 2020, Tom's friend became concerned about Tom's circumstances, following contact from Tom. This led to Tom's friend contacting Tom's mother, who subsequently made a safeguarding referral to West Sussex County Council.

The safeguarding process identified concerns about serious neglect, coercive control, and intimidation. Tom was also underweight, not being supported with his personal care or to get out of bed. His then wife and paid carer were also having an affair and would leave Tom alone in the house for long periods of time.

The concern being raised led to a robust and coordinated response arranged by Adult Social Care to support Tom to safely move into temporary residential accommodation in August 2020.

Tom's ex-wife and paid carer were arrested in the first case of its kind in the UK. On 12 May 2023, both were found guilty of holding a person in slavery/servitude and jailed for eight years and a further three years on licence.

In August 2023, a referral was made to the Safeguarding Adults Board by West Sussex County Council. It was acknowledged that there were missed opportunities between 2016 and 2020, and that there is learning which could be taken forward from a Review to minimise future risk.

Agencies involved in this Review included West Sussex County Council, Sussex Police, NHS Sussex ICB, NursePlus, Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust, University Hospitals Sussex and Tom's GP surgery.

Key learning: what we need to do better

- Strength-based and person-centred approaches
- Sharing of information and multi-agency working
- Professional curiosity
- Case note recording
- Monitoring of direct payments

Questions to ask yourself

The below key areas of recommendations will be taken forward in a multi-agency action plan. This plan will be monitored to seek assurance that actions have been completed to improve practice and minimise risk. Please consider the following questions to make sure your practice reflects the learning from this case.

Strength-based and person-centred approaches

- When carrying out visits, do you meet with the adult separately and privately, away from family or carers?
- Do you ask the adult about decisions regarding their care and living circumstances?
- Are opinions and views of family members on the adult's care also verified/checked with the adult and external agencies?

Sharing information and multi-agency working

- Do you share appropriate information with agencies involved with the adult?
- Do you look out for patterns of activity e.g. missed/cancelled appointments and speak with other involved agencies to check if there are any similar patterns/concerns?

Professional curiosity

- **Look:** Do you look for any behaviours which may indicate abuse or neglect, including any signs of coercion and control by noticing the interaction between the adult and family/carers?
- **Listen:** Do you actively listen to what else the adult might be trying to communicate to you, which could be difficult to express or speak openly about?
- **Ask:** Do you ask direct questions where you have concerns?
- **Clarify:** Do you check with others/agencies involved to see if anyone else is aware and/or is taking any actions, including any concerns with executive functioning?

Research indicates that those who experience abuse, including coercion and control, find it easier to respond to a direct question e.g. “who makes decisions about what you can and cannot do?” or “is anyone hurting you?”

Case note recording

- Do you document comprehensive details of contacts and visits, including your professional view of these?
- Are your records clear, concise, accurate and objective?
- Do you record both facts and your professional views and clarify the difference?
- When it is not possible to access the adult's views privately, do you record the reason for this?



Monitoring of direct payments

There could be indicators of issues/concerns with adults who receive direct payments.

- Do you check that domiciliary care agencies are completing the checks on care provided? If there are any issues e.g. cancellation of visits by the adult or carers, is the agency escalating these to Adult Social Care?
- When carrying out a review, do you liaise with the direct payment team to ask whether the bank statements have been being sent in on time, the bank balance hasn't run into surplus or overdraft, and that there haven't been any questionable purchases made?
- If you work for a domiciliary care agency, do you look for any patterns of cancelled visits, including field check visits, and escalate these to Adult Social Care?
- Do you check with the adult privately about their views on how the direct payment is being managed/used?

Learning resources

To extend your learning, please do refer to the following learning resources:

- [Safeguarding Early Warning Signs](#)
- [Person-Centred Approaches](#)
- [Professional Curiosity](#)
- [Multi-Agency Working and Communication](#)
- [Risk Assessment](#)
- [Mental Capacity Act](#)
- [Safeguarding Thresholds Guidance](#)

To support your Continual Professional Development (CPD) we have created a [CPD Reflective Log](#) for your use. Please feel free to use this to track, and reflect on, the professional development that you complete using our resources.