

Adult E

Statement by the Independent Chair of West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board

On the 7th August 2016 concerned neighbours contacted Sussex Police, as they had not seen Adult E (aged 79 years) for over a week. Having forced entry the Police found Adult E on her kitchen floor, covered in her own faeces. It was later concluded that she had been lying for 10 days. She died in hospital during the evening of the 8th August, with the cause of death recorded as 'multi organ failure, dehydration and long-lay and collapse due to underlying co-morbidities'.

Little is known of Adult E's personal history. She was a divorcee, living in Pulborough, West Sussex at the time of her death. Her son had died of cancer in 2013. A picture emerged of a woman with caring and supportive neighbours (who had previously raised concerns about her welfare), but Adult E was a self-reliant and private person, determined to maintain her independence despite the concerns of others.

A Safeguarding Adult Review was commissioned by West Sussex Safeguarding Adult Board in December 2016, and was undertaken by Pete Morgan, an Independent Author. The purpose of a Safeguarding Adult Review is not to apportion blame on individuals or agencies, but to understand what happened and to learn lessons.

It was agreed that the focus of the review would be from the period of 1st January to the 8th August 2016, although agencies involved in Adult E's care could include earlier information, where this was considered relevant to the Review.

The report concluded that on balance Adult E's death was not "predictable" or "preventable" and that agencies had operated within their target response times. However, the report author made a number of recommendations for learning at both national and local level, which are included in the report.

Whilst recognising the right of people with mental capacity to decline support, as indeed Adult E had done on an earlier occasion, the report recommends that GP and partner agencies need to have in place systems to contact and share concerns of those patients, for whom there are known concerns, but who fail to respond to support.

It is encouraging to note that West Sussex County Council have already taken steps to address one of the issues raised in the report, to ensure that referrals to CarePoint One and Two are effectively triaged, and that cases which partner agencies believe need to be prioritised will be dealt with accordingly.

In conclusion, the report's findings have been accepted by West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board, and it will now be for the Board's Safeguarding Adult Review sub group to ensure that the key recommendations are disseminated across the relevant partner agencies.

David Cooper

Independent Chair
West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board