

'Ms Stitch' Safeguarding Adults Review

Ms Stitch suffered serious physical harm due to abuse perpetrated by two adults who were known to her. This abuse took place in a context of cuckooing and adult exploitation. The perpetrators have been convicted and are serving custodial sentences. Ms Stitch is recovering from her experiences.

A Safeguarding Adults Review was undertaken to understand what had happened, and to identify areas of learning to improve future practice.

Ms Stitch has an uncommon degenerative health condition, she was provided with a package of care and support, and was supported by a complex network of health professionals, and a specialist voluntary group. Ms Stitch was also known to housing services.



The SAR was led by an independent author, and included contributions from Ms Stitch and her family.

Key Lessons for Practice

Professional Curiosity

By the time the perpetrators of Ms Stitch's abuse moved into her home, the presence of 'friends' for support and 'missed' or 'cancelled' appointments had become Ms Stitch's 'norm'. This effectively stifled professional curiosity into Ms Stitch's circumstances and professionals accepted her withdrawal from their services, which granted space and opportunity for the perpetrators to conduct their horrific abuse.

Over reliance on telephone communication can make it harder to understand an individual's experiences. Where there are concerns about exploitation, or any suspicion that an adult may be being coerced or influenced, ensure that you see the adult in person, and alone.

Coordination of Care

Professionals identified that assessments were often conducted in silos and would have been stronger and more robust if they had included information about Ms Stitch's history and if they had included the expertise of other agencies working with her. This is particularly important when supporting an adult with an uncommon condition, we need to understand the nature and impact of health conditions in order to support and safeguard adults where necessary.

As a result of agencies not sharing information, or of understanding Ms Stitch, no agency ever gained full awareness of her lived experiences, nor the barriers she faced to accessing support.

Quality Assurance and Management Oversight

Managers have a core role in ensuring that frontline practitioners have access to reflective supervision. This is fundamental to good practice especially when responding to complex and challenging circumstances.

Managers should quality assure the content of assessments and plans, providing support, and give guidance to frontline practitioners, and encourage professional curiosity. Managers also need supervision, guidance and training themselves.

