



Learning Lessons Briefing 'Cathryn'

Methodology: Multi-agency tabletop review meeting

Practitioner Involvement: Practitioner records and notes were reviewed prior to the meeting

Scoping Period for the review: July 2023 – July 2024

The Review

Background Summary:

Cathryn, aged 22, presented with complex health conditions including mobility impairment, obesity, mental health disorders, encephalitis, vitamin D deficiency, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, and learning disabilities. She also had a documented history of substance misuse. In July 2024, Cathryn was found deceased at a friend's residence due to toxicity from cocaine and morphine. At the time of her passing, she was residing in a nursing home in Wolverhampton, where she had been placed by a neighbouring authority as a result of her mobility limitations.

Learning:

- There was a lack of timely social work and mental health involvement, leading to delays in assessments and support for Cathryn.
- Referrals to substance misuse services were not considered, despite Cathryn's known struggles with substance misuse.
- Cathryn's capacity was assumed without thorough exploration, and the impact of her autism on decision-making was not considered.
- Delays in the transfer of care between local authorities affected the timeliness of mental health support.
- Missed opportunities to explore potential domestic abuse between Cathryn and her ex-boyfriend.

- The need for clear and robust communication between local authorities to ensure timely action on safeguarding concerns.

Recommendations:

1. Establishing clear and robust communication channels, particularly when an individual is residing in a different local authority area, to ensure timely action on safeguarding concerns.
2. Ensuring assessments and reviews undertaken in a timely manner.
3. Consideration should be given to making referrals to substance misuse services for individuals with known substance misuse issues.
4. Thoroughly exploring an individual's capacity and considering the impact of neurodivergence on decision-making.
5. Improving the transfer of care process between local authorities to ensure timely support.
6. Exploring potential domestic abuse situations more thoroughly.

How can you make a difference?

Key messages from the learning to ask yourself for your practice are: -

- *Can I make changes to improve my own practice?*
- *Do I need to seek further support, training, or supervision?*