

Learning Report – Vera



What were the circumstances that led to this SAR?

Vera was a 76-year-old lady, who up until her death, had been living at home with her husband. Vera repeatedly expressed a strong wish to remain in her home with her husband and son, who provided informal care. Vera died in hospital in September 2023, after suffering a heart attack at home.

Vera had a number of health conditions. Type 2 Respiratory Failure, which had many factors of need, including oxygen supplementation, posture control, use of a bilevel positive airway pressure ('BiPAP') machine night and day, and control of anxiety which affected her breathing. She also had stage 4 chronic kidney disease and type 2 diabetes.

Vera had a history of falls in the home leading to hospital admissions. In September 2022, following a Continuing Health Care² (CHC) Assessment Vera received care at home which was jointly funded by CHC and Worcestershire County Council. Vera had multiple care providers attempt to meet her needs commissioned through the Reablement Team Service.

In July 2023, Vera was admitted to a local Hospital and after two days transferred to an out of county hospital. Vera was discharged four days later.

In July 2023, Vera was re-assessed for CHC and a fully funded 24/7 wrap around nursing care at home was agreed. This care package was not initiated before she suffered a heart attack at home and was taken to hospital, where she died.

The circumstances was referred to the Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board as there were concerns about the way agencies worked together to safeguard Vera.

The Safeguarding Board, having considered the circumstances felt that it did not meet the threshold for a mandatory Safeguarding Adult Review, but as it was apparent that there was some learning to be achieved, they decided to undertake a discretionary SAR.

¹ A ventilator to assist for breathing

² NHS Continuing Healthcare (NHS CHC) is a package of care for adults aged 18 or over which is arranged and funded solely by the NHS. In order to receive NHS CHC funding individuals have to be assessed by integrated commissioning boards (ICBs) according to a legally prescribed decision-making process to determine whether the individual has a 'primary health need'.

What was the nature of the abuse or neglect?

There were concerns over the time that was taken for Vera to achieve an assessment that she should receive full Continuing Healthcare.

There were a number of domiciliary care providers commissioned who were not equipped to provide the care and support that Vera required. This led to a lack of consistent care.

Vera had several complex conditions and when she was discharged from hospital the transition from hospital was not as coordinated as it could have been, and this caused frustration and distress to the family.

What should you do?

- If you are involved in a complex case always consider bringing the professionals involved together to discuss the case. Wherever possible involve the person receiving the care and if they wish, members of their family/support network.

Escalation Policy – Resolution of Professional Concerns

- Professionals should always be aware of the pressure that family or informal carers can be under as a result of their role. Always consider and offer a carer assessment. Always consider whether the caring relationship has become or could become controlling and do your best to speak to the person receiving the care on their own to ensure that they are able fully express their views and wishes.

Worcestershire Association for Carers website

Mental Capacity Act 2005 – Guidance and Policy for Staff

Limiting Long-Term Illness (LLTI) and Disability – Guidance for Referrals (SafeLives – Ending Domestic Abuse)

Learning identified	What will help?
Understanding the views and perspective of those involved in providing care to family members with complex care needs	To be aware of the pressure that a carers may be under and to always consider care assessments. Be aware and careful about how family interactions are recorded, particularly where there may be some ongoing friction. Language is important and can make challenging situations more difficult to manage.
Understanding the level of care that care providers are able to provide	Careful and timely assessment, particularly for Continuing Healthcare. <u>Language and labelling.</u>
The value of ensuring that professionals with the right experience are involved in complex cases	Understanding the complex issues and how the right support can be achieved.