

# Camden Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board

## 7 minute briefing Re: 'Matthew' Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR)



1.

A Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) was commissioned following the death of Matthew (a pseudonym), whose body was discovered in his flat in the London Borough of Camden on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2020. Matthew was a White British male and was 47 years old at the time of his death..

A subsequent inquest concluded that the cause of Matthew's death was 'unascertained'. A more definitive conclusion was not possible given the time which had elapsed between death and the discovery of Matthew's body.

Matthew had a long history of contact with drug misuse services, disclosing using drugs from a young age. He also had contact with mental health services in respect of depression and had a history of suicidal ideation and attempts to take his own life. He was diagnosed with ADHD and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

He was a council tenant and the tenancy in the flat in which the 'cuckooing' occurred began in 2015..

2. What happened?

During 2018/2019 concerns arose that Matthew may be a victim of cuckooing by young men who were involved in serious violence and drug dealing. A Closure Order was obtained in 2019 which prohibited access to his flat for three months. Application was made to extend the Closure Order but this was unsuccessful. Matthew had been supported to relocate to a hostel in the London Borough of Hackney and returned to his flat once the Closure Order expired. After Matthew's return to the flat there were further incidents of anti-social behaviour and possible drug dealing which may have been indications of cuckooing and a further Closure Order was being progressed in the period prior to Matthew's sudden death.

3. Engagement with services...family...

Matthew received treatment from Camden Specialist Drug Services (CSDS) and was prescribed methadone (daily supervised consumption by his pharmacy) and diazepam. The CSDS engaged well with Matthew and adopted a person-centred approach although the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic limited contact with him primarily to telephone calls. Camden Housing Services also maintained sympathetic contact with Matthew and understood his history. Matthew received support from his sister who lived nearby.

4. Learning Point

A victim of any form of criminal exploitation, including cuckooing, may not always appreciate they are being exploited and they may behave in ways which are not seen as being compatible with being a victim. However, those engaged in the exploitative behaviour exercise power over them in a relationship which is not equal. Victims of cuckooing can often be perceived as offenders or perpetrators of anti-social behaviour which may mask their vulnerability to an extent. It is important that professionals from various disciplines do not set too high a bar for their expectations of victim behaviour when it is suspected that they may be being criminally exploited.

The initial approach to Matthew's disclosures of cuckooing was to advise him to report the matter to the police. However, victims of cuckooing may be worried about going to the police for fear of being suspected of drug dealing or membership of the gang which has taken over their home, or fear of repercussions from the gang and fear of losing their tenancy.

Matthew may have been influenced by 'undue pressure' by the men who appear to have taken over his flat for a period in 2018/2019. The extent to which this could have affected his capacity to make decisions does not appear to have been considered by any agency in contact with him at that time.

5. Learning Point

When the Closure Order was obtained in 2019 and Matthew vacated his flat and moved to the Hostel in Hackney, the Hostel received no information about Matthew other than his name. He continued to be supported by Camden Specialist Drug Services, but he temporarily lost support networks, including his Camden GP practice and the pharmacy where he was well known. His mental health deteriorated immediately prior to vacating his flat and his move to Hackney may have generated feelings of isolation and loneliness. Although, obtaining the Closure Order was fully justified in Matthew's case, consideration should also be given to supporting the victim in their own home where this is a viable option..

When efforts to extend the Closure Order by a further three months failed, Matthew returned to the flat and there is no indication that a risk assessment was carried out or a protection plan was put in place. Matthew's sister contributed to the SAR and strongly felt that her brother should not have returned to the flat after the Closure Order expired, but having

6. Learning Point.

After Matthew returned to his flat in 2019 when the first Closure Order expired, further complaints were received from Matthew's neighbours in relation to noise, loud music, drug dealing and different groups of people visiting the flat in contravention of Covid-19 restrictions.

The Closure Order process was re-commenced in August 2020 but no assessment of the impact of the Closure Order on Matthew was carried out. (Prior to the 2019 Closure Order a report had been prepared by CSDS which provided details of his history, diagnoses, care and treatment and the then risks to Matthew which included accidental overdose, relapsing mental state, self-harm and increase in suicidal ideation and physical health deterioration).

Where a Closure Order is being considered, current information about any vulnerabilities affecting the tenant subject to the Closure Order should be obtained.

7 Learning Point

The London Borough of Camden and Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust – which is the provider of Camden Specialist Drug Services - have a longstanding partnership agreement under Section 75 of the NHS Act 2006 under which appropriately trained managers within the Trust act on behalf of the Local Authority to undertake adult safeguarding duties. During the period in which Matthew was first believed to be a victim of cuckooing (March 2018 to May 2019) these arrangements did not appear to be working effectively. Much progress has been achieved in improving the effectiveness and the recording of safeguarding by the Trust which will need to be maintained and built upon.