



LEARNING FROM SERIOUS INCIDENT REVIEW 8

SHEFFIELD SAFER AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP

DATE - January 2022

WHAT HAPPENED?

In January 2021 Adult 8, a 66-year-old woman was seriously injured in a domestic abuse incident perpetrated by her adult son, who was experiencing a psychotic episode. Police forced entry to her property to find Adult 8P holding a hammer and Adult 8 seriously injured. Her face was 'unrecognisable' and included broken facial bones and a bleed on the brain. Adult 8P has been sentenced to 8 years in prison.

Four months before, Adult 8P had attacked his mother during a previous psychotic episode which was assessed as standard risk. This led to Adult 8P's first contact with mental health services. Adult 8P had a history of drug use, anti-social behaviour and was furloughed from work.

WHAT DID IT TELL US?

This was a case of Adult Family Violence (AFV). **AFV is not uncommon**, indeed an estimated 1.9%¹ of the population were abused by a family member in the last year, a quarter of domestic abuse homicides involve AFV² and 37% of domestic abuse serious incidents in Sheffield.

Professionals are likely to identify more cases of AFV following the **new statutory definition of domestic abuse**³ which includes more family relationships.

Standing Together have found that AFV cases have similar signs and indicators and these were observed in this case⁴. Adult 8 was **caring** for her son, Adult 8P had **mental health** and **substance misuse** issues, struggled with **isolation** and was **emotionally dependant** on his parents. Adult 8 did not engage with IDVA support and risk assessment opportunities were missed with Adult 8 and the father.

When Adult 8 was assessed, the abuse was minimised, she did not consider herself as a victim of domestic abuse and was focused on getting help for her son's mental health.

WHAT CAN WE DO NOW?

Agencies to revise their domestic abuse protocols and procedures to include AFV with reference to good practice resources.

DASH risk assess all victims of AFV on all relevant occasions and consider potential minimisation *and* risk to other family members

BEST PRACTICE

- The police completed a DASH risk assessment.
- Adult Safeguarding used professional curiosity, offered to review the risk assessment and when domestic abuse support was refused, shared information by post.
- Mental health early intervention staff spoke with seniors and discussed how to balance Adult 8P's wishes when he did not want support against their assessment. They also engaged with family and respected them when they said things were better.
- Adult 8's GP sent Adult 8 a letter offering a holistic appointment to discuss her COPD and wellbeing, this would have given an opportunity for her to disclose.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Professionals failed to understand his mental health in the context of domestic abuse. Adult 8 was not seen as a victim and her risk was not fully understood.
- Opportunities were missed to DASH risk assess.
- Adult 8's lack of engagement and minimisation of the abuse was not explored.
- Adult 8P had a recent history of substance misuse and was not referred to treatment services.
- Adult 8's eligibility for a carer's assessment was not considered.
- Agencies find it difficult to record information when professional concerns are shared about a family member who is not on their caseload. E.g. Adult 8 and Adult 8P had different GP practices and Adult 8's information was placed on Adult 8P's record but was not easy to find.



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¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabuseprevalenceandtrendsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2020>

² <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee0be2588f1e349401c832c/t/5efcb376866b33242d04c3cb/1593619318736/AFV+Briefing+Sheet.pdf>

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/part/1/enacted>

⁴ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee0be2588f1e349401c832c/t/5efcb376866b33242d04c3cb/1593619318736/AFV+Briefing+Sheet.pdf>

