
Making Safeguarding Personal Toolkit

Case Example 14:

Achieving resolution in safeguarding – assessing and responding to risk



Case Example 14: Achieving resolution in safeguarding – assessing and responding to risk



Case Example

This situation involves an older, physically disabled woman (Margaret) who allowed her son with problematic substance use (Dave) to continue to live with her. He was stealing her money, subjecting her to extreme emotional stress, and allowing his associates to come into her house to deal drugs. This continued over a long period of time where safeguarding concerns would be raised by neighbours, professionals and Margaret herself. The case was assigned to the same practitioner each time in recognition of the complexity of the situation and that she had built a rapport with Margaret. The practitioner would visit and discuss options, Margaret would choose a week of respite in residential care to get away from her son, would return home and continue as before, until it became too much when contact would be made with social services again, with this pattern continuing for some months. A simple risk assessment tool would clearly describe the situation as high risk – significant impact: high likelihood of ongoing incidents. The practitioner, used to operating in a task-oriented team, wanted a resolution, to fix the issues to make Margaret safe. In the absence of Dave seeking help for his problems, the ultimate safety solutions appeared to be for Margaret to move, possibly into residential care, or have support to evict Dave from her home, making him homeless. Margaret did not want either of these options and the situation continued, although the practitioner was anxious at what might happen to Margaret.

Source: White E 2017:114-115



Reflective questions

What's working in the current situation?

Taking a rights-based perspective, what human rights are relevant to Margaret's current situation?

Case Example 14: Achieving resolution in safeguarding – assessing and responding to risk

Analysis

Taking a rights-based perspective it is clear that either option – Margaret moving into a residential home or Margaret having support to evict Dave from her home, making him homeless – would have been restrictive in terms of her liberty and family life.

The practitioner offered respite when requested, consistency when contacted, and advice and guidance for Dave on help for addiction and a housing application, when asked.

She was doing exactly what Margaret needed in order to be able to cope with the risks in her life at that time.

A rights-based approach to assessing and responding to risk is effective in:

- > understanding that all the choices faced by Margaret may have led to some degree of harm from her perspective.
- > working collaboratively on understanding risk and underwriting safety, leading to a more mutually satisfying relationship based on trust (Boardman and Roberts 2014)
- > exploring the protective value of increased choice and developing techniques to detect abuse or make it more difficult to occur (Stevens et al 2014). This involved putting in place proactive strategies and contingency planning within a support plan.

This case example is adapted from White E (2017) 'Assessing and Responding to Risk' in Cooper A and White E (Eds) (2017, pp 110-127) *Safeguarding Adults under the Care Act 2014: Understanding Good Practice*. London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley