

North Lanarkshire Adult Protection Committee Significant Case Review (SCR) into Miss A (2016)

The following is taken from the above SCR. It aims to give the salient points to allow for analysis and to pose questions on how Council Officers, in similar situations, might act. Quotes in italics are direct quotes from the report. The full report can be accessed at:

<http://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/adultprotection/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=20517&p=0>

The SCR describes Miss A, a woman who was 60 years old when she died. Miss A had lived with her parents up until their deaths in 1991. She was an only child with no other relatives and she moved to a flat in Motherwell where she was supported by a local provider of support services. She assumed the tenancy of the property in 2003. This was financed by a trust fund and at this stage Miss A had a Financial Guardian through the 2000 AWI Act. In July 2008 the financial guardianship was discharged due to her dwindling funds.

A Community Care Assessment in 2006 concluded Miss A had learning disabilities and did not fully understand the reason for the assessment. It confirmed Miss A *“could not live alone without support and advised that she required assistance with most daily tasks - cooking, planning shopping, managing correspondence and finances and budgeting”*. She wanted to remain in her own flat and the same provider continued to support Miss A.

Mr B was a 49-year-old man who had a learning disability. In 2004 he was referred to NHS Lanarkshire’s Learning Disability team related to his behaviour at work, inappropriate comments to female colleagues and his failure to understand social norms. His psychological therapist stated he had a low IQ and experienced anxiety and depression. This manifested itself in social awkwardness, inappropriate language and some minor thefts and occasional abuse of alcohol. It was reported that he was a physically imposing individual and, whilst he could be verbally aggressive, he was not physically aggressive.

They met in 2007 and became engaged in August 2008. By November 2008, Miss A’s support staff recorded that Mr B was *‘grumpy and unpleasant’* and possibly taking money from Miss A. In December 2008, Miss A took an overdose of her prescribed medication following the breaking off of their engagement and she was hospitalised overnight feeling low and depressed. At this time, her support staff recorded *“...Mr B had been verbally abusive and had struck her during an argument. It was also noted ... there was bruising on her face, lower back and thighs. These circumstances were reported to the Care Commission at this time”*. In response to this her support at home was increased. ASP procedures were not instigated.

STAGE ONE QUESTIONS:

- As a Council Officer do you “know or believe” Miss A is an “adult at risk” at this stage?
- What information would you want to help you make an assessment of this?

NHS Lanarkshire's LD team conducted a Sexuality Awareness Assessment of Miss A. This concluded that Miss A had an adequate understanding of her sexuality and what was involved in being in a healthy sexual relationship. This assessment was not copied to others. Miss A assured the LD Nurse she understood what to do if someone was abusive to her.

Between January and April 2009, discussions between Miss A's support staff, NLC Social Services and NHS Lanarkshire LD team focused on strategies to manage Mr B's violence. However this continued and he continued to take money from her and break her spectacles. In this period there were three review meetings involving NLC Social Work, Miss A's support service and Miss A and discussions between Miss A's LD nurse and a therapist for Mr B.

In 2009 Miss A broke the relationship off. She did not have contact with Mr B for four years.

In August 2013, Miss A told support staff she had met Mr B again and, whilst she initially indicated "*she did not wish to see him because he was shouting at her and asking for money from her*", the relationship was fully re-established in November 2013. There were indications that she was frightened of him but Miss A assured people she wanted the relationship to continue. NLC Social Work Services recorded that the relationship had been abusive in the past and it would be managed and monitored. There was no detail of what form this management and monitoring would take.

In late November 2013 Miss A's carers "*felt that she was hiding the relationship with Mr B from them because she realised that they were not happy with it*". The submission of an Adult Protection referral was considered but not progressed.

STAGE TWO QUESTIONS:

- a) What is your current opinion on whether Miss A meets the "adult at risk" criteria
- b) What legal responsibilities do you have – consider all relevant legislation.
- c) Trying hard not to apply the "benefit of hindsight" in this situation would you have proposed and inquiry and/or an investigation and/or the holding of an ASP Case Conference?

At a review in February 2014 there was some question that Mr B might be '*forcing himself*' on her. Support staff said Miss A had a sexual relationship with Mr B that was "*pleasurable.. which she consented to.*" It was decided not to instigate ASP procedures.

On 18th May 2014 Miss A travelled to Uddingston to meet Mr B. Visiting him alone was very unusual and staff thought she might not manage this safely. She returned home and the next day stated she would go back to visit Mr B alone. When she didn't return home that day Police were called and when they interviewed Mr B he told the Police he had pushed Miss A into the River Clyde. Her body was found later that day and Mr B charged with her murder.