

Notes of meeting with the Chair of Worcestershire's Adult Safeguarding Board and the Board Manager at County Hall on 15 January 2018

- Healthwatch Worcestershire's interest in the application of Adult Safeguarding procedures in relation to Cardon Banfield arises from:
 - Statutory function to enable local people to monitor the quality of health social care service provision in this case Adult Safeguarding, and
 - That it is our understanding that the outreach service for homeless adults in Worcestershire is funded by public health grant
 - The continuous improvement in Safeguarding Adults as a publicly funded health and care service.
- Whilst acknowledging the view expressed by the Chair of the ASB that some homeless adults might have chosen a homeless lifestyle, it was our proposition that given the implication for an individual's health and wellbeing of being homeless it would be reasonable to approach the issue based on a rebuttable presumption that a homeless adult was vulnerable. We suggest this proposition is supported by the wealth of research that indicates homelessness is not a lifestyle choice. As was pointed out to us in the meeting the application of the Care Act turns on the care and support needs of the individual, and therefore on reflection we believe that can only add weight to our proposition as care and support needs are established as a third-party judgement against statutory criteria based on assessment by a professional. Furthermore, people who are homeless - and perhaps in particular rough sleepers - may well suffer from other conditions such as mental ill health which in turn may affect their decision-making capacity and the choices they are deemed to have made.
- We note that the ASB referral was made by a member of the public and understand the referral occurred after the Coroner's Inquest. Given that the death was investigated by the police, was the subject of a Coroner's Inquest and received publicity in the local media we are surprised, given that the cause of death was not established that none of the voluntary sector organisations who we now know were in contact with the deceased, Worcester City Council as the housing authority, the police or the Coroner who recorded an open verdict referred the matter to the ASB. Given no referral was made we are concerned that those organisations that have safeguarding responsibilities in Worcestershire are aware of their responsibilities in that respect to homeless adults who may have or have had care and support needs. We discussed training within organisations. Please can you provide assurance about this.
- In response to our 'challenge' about the decision not to undertake a SAR we were provided with information that we understood the timeline indicated had been collected from the public and voluntary sectors organisations. We were initially informed that the deceased had not been in contact with the housing authority but following an enquiry by a third part it was confirmed that he had. We were surprised given the circumstances in which the deceased body was found that such information was not immediately available from any police enquiry that was carried out into death.

- We had been informed that the criteria for a SAR had not been met as there was no evidence of a failure in multi-agency working as the deceased had not been in contact with organisations prior to his death [NB He was, however, in contact with voluntary sector organisations each of which has its own safeguarding policy and procedure]. We are concerned that a very narrow interpretation of the criteria for a SAR has been taken and that the policy provides for discretion which. In any event, given the current and intended role of the voluntary sector in the provision of health and social care services we invited you to consider the deceased's contact with them as sufficient grounds to justify a review which might then address provision that is made to safeguard the care and support needs of homeless adults in the county.

It has also been suggested that a SAR was not appropriate as the deceased was known to have spent time in the Birmingham area prior to his death. For us this raises the issue of 'cross-border' cooperation in addressing Adult Safeguarding and we seek reassurance that such circumstances would not be detrimental in safeguarding adults.

- We have been advised that Worcester City Council has decided to carry out an inquiry under the Homelessness Link guidance. It appeared to us that the past ASB Chair had placed great reliance on this, although our understanding at the time was that no such review was planned. Whilst we welcome the inquiry it cannot be seen in our view as a substitute for a SAR.