

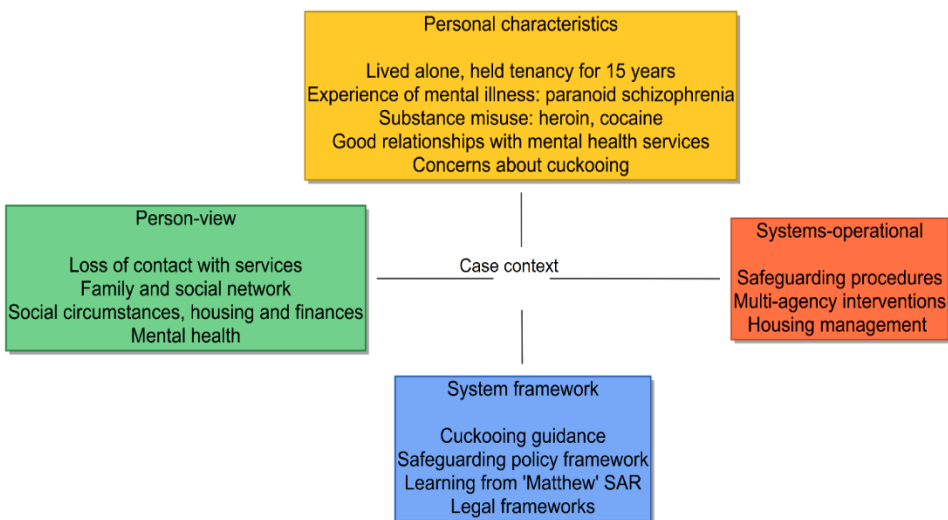
Camden Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board

7-minute briefing Re: 'Paul' Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR)



Rationale for Safeguarding Adults Review

The case of Paul concerns a white British man in his mid-forties who lived in Camden and who was well-known to mental health services with established mental health conditions of schizophrenia, and records of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Paul had co-existing conditions of congenital cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and substance misuse including heroin and cocaine. Paul had a good relationship with mental health services, attending well at a depot clinic where he received a monthly injection of mental health medication and working closely with his social worker whom he had known for over 15 years. Paul was also close to his mother and saw her regularly. At the time of his death a safeguarding process was ongoing in relation to cuckooing concerns.



Cuckooing

Cuckooing is “the practice of taking over a person’s home, usually in order to establish a base for criminal activities. It is the term used when a person alleged to be causing harm uses the home of an adult at risk to handle cash proceeds of crime, to store and/or supply drugs, weapons or engage in other criminal activities, and is a form of criminal exploitation.

The case of Paul demonstrates the challenges that safeguarding systems and professionals face when individuals with multiple vulnerabilities are targeted for exploitation, and the limitations of existing frameworks to tackle the issue of exploitation and cuckooing of adults at risk. That an adult such as Paul, who was so well known and well-supported by services could be subject to cuckooing shows just how significant these challenges can be.



SAR Questions

- 1. Person-view:** What can we learn about the safeguarding system through Paul’s experience as an adult with co-existing mental health and drug use, exploitation and cuckooing, and vulnerability to others?
- 2. Systems-operational view:** Objectively, what was the impact of 6-9 months of safeguarding activity with Paul? How did services respond to concerns and risks in the case of Paul?
- 3. System frameworks:** How well does the system in Camden work in the context of policy, guidance, and legal frameworks, in particular the Camden Cuckooing Guidance and Matthew Safeguarding Adults Review (2023)

SAR Question 1: Person View

Targeted prevention

Cuckooing is a multi-faceted issue, and cycles of exploitation can be difficult to break. Prevention is a key principle in effective safeguarding – “it is better to take action before harm occurs” [1]. Preventative interventions may be targeted at individuals deemed to be at risk, or towards communities and may include community awareness campaigns, training for frontline workers, routine enquiry and targeted support for at risk individuals, education, and a relationship-based approach with adults at risk. Prevention and early intervention may give potential victims the resources and confidence to seek help and potentially avoid harm.

SAR Question 2: Systems-Operational View

Combined safeguarding approaches

There is often a tendency to avoid legal options until necessary – using legal powers to intervene in an individual’s life (victim or perpetrator) invariably engages an individual’s human rights. Legal options are often viewed as costly and heavy-handed, however in cases of cuckooing, evidence points towards early intervention and a combined approach of safeguarding powers and legal options including anti-social behaviour legislation, housing legislation, criminal law, mental health and capacity law, and the inherent jurisdiction of the High Court.

Given the diverse legal frameworks that maybe needed in cases of cuckooing it is important that appropriate expertise and knowledge is made available to safeguarding networks early in the process.

SAR Question 3: System Frameworks

A perpetrator gap

Current guidance and legal options are balanced towards the protection of victims while there remain systemic challenges in tackling perpetrators or people alleged to have caused harm. While the current system is primarily victim-focused, it is important that safeguarding and community safety agencies consider how to address this apparent ‘perpetrator gap’ and target interventions against those cause harm.

The case for a cuckooing offence

Under the current legal framework there is no standalone offence of cuckooing. Instead, to address cuckooing, agencies must use a safeguarding approach combined with related legislative powers to support victims, to address the anti-social behaviour that can result from criminal activity in a premises, and to take action to investigate and prosecute criminal offences Current offences under related legislation do not specifically address the coercion, control, and exploitation that lie at the heart of cuckooing.