

Safeguarding Adult Review Adult K Extended Learning Brief

Background

Adult K moved to the United Kingdom from Nigeria when she was around 29 years old. Two years later Adult K gave birth to a child who was later diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental disorder. Until the scoping period of this review – when Adult K stopped presenting her child for education, there were no concerns for the care Adult K provided her child.

There followed an escalation of concerns in respect of Adult K's ability to meet her child's needs which resulted in the child becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan and the child eventually becoming 'Cared For' in July 2020.

Whilst Adult K initially engaged with contacts arranged for her to see her child, her contact ceased after 6 months and the Children With Disabilities Team thereafter found Adult K hard to reach.

In August 2022, Adult K was found deceased in her property. Her cause of death is unascertained, and the Coroner recorded an Open Verdict.

Agencies Understanding of Adult K's Lived Experience

Adult K was known to be highly articulate, and a very composed well-dressed lady. The reasons for her change in demeanour around the beginning of the scoping period of this review remain unknown. It has become clear during the course of this review that no professional gained a good understanding of Adult K. In particular, there wasn't enough professional understanding of how Adult K's cultural background potentially affected her response to support services offered in Great Britain.

In time, professionals' concerns escalated to the point that a court order was granted for her child to become cared for. For unknown reasons, Adult K found herself unable to continue with her regular contact sessions with her child and unable to reach out to professionals who may have been able to offer her support and advice. She also withdrew from her contact with family in Nigeria. When Adult K was sadly found deceased in her property, she had been living without her son for just over a year. Her new lived experience after her child became cared for remains unknown to all.

Understanding Adult K's lived experience was crucial, and this serves as a reminder as to how important professional curiosity is.

Think Family (and Referrals to other Agencies).

Professionals worked well to safeguard Adult K's child, but a Think Family approach would have seen better consideration of Adult K's situation and changes in her behaviour.

Consideration was had of Adult K's mental health, but she was deemed to not meet the requirements to be detained under the Mental Health Act, and she declined a Mental Health Assessment.

Professionals' unsuccessful attempts to engage Adult K with support, were not consistently shared with multi-agency partners and as a consequence no professional/agency developed the full picture of Adult K's circumstances.

Professional Understanding of Mental Health Pathways.

With the exception of mental health practitioners, professionals demonstrated confusion around Mental Health pathways.

In particular there was confusion regarding the differences between a Mental Health Assessment and a Mental Health Act Assessment.

Good Practice

A quick response was made by school when Adult K and her child became hard to reach.

Children's Social Workers, unsure of the process regarding a Mental Health Act Assessment, sought the advice of Adult Social Care.

The Approved Mental Health Professional Hub responded quickly to Children's Social Care's request for a Mental Health Act Assessment.

A Doctor attending to complete the Mental Health Act Assessment demonstrated good professional curiosity and thoroughly explored Adult K's religion with her.

What did we learn?

- As a result of not all professionals effectively exploring Adult K's background and culture, some professionals/agencies did not gain a vital understanding of Adult K's lived experiences or barriers to engagement.
- Practitioners did not consistently apply the Think Family approach and consequently opportunities were missed to engage Adult K in support in a timely way where there was chance to do so.
- A multi-agency opportunity to share information was missed when it went unnoticed that the actions of the strategy meeting had not been executed.
- The local authority effectively safeguarded Adult K's child's welfare but there were missed opportunities to support Adult K to access services to help her manage the situation.
- A proactive approach to parents is required at the time a child becomes cared for, in an attempt to pave the way for future professional engagement and support them to access support services.
- Currently, not many professionals other than mental health practitioners, fully understand the mental health pathways.

What needs to happen?

- Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Adult Board need to ensure that their subgroup considers the action plan produced in response to Adult H, against the learning within this report.
- Partner agencies need to assure both Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Adult Board and Safeguarding Children's Partnership that professionals from all agencies are informed of a 'Think Family' approach and support one another to include it within practice.
- Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Adult Board (with the support of the Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership) need to establish the extent of actions produced in Strategy Meetings being missed, using a multi-agency system audit process.
- Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Adult Board (with the support of the Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership) need to produce a guidance document for professionals working with the parents of children becoming cared for.

The guidance should:

- develop/explore what support/advocacy services are available,
- explain how a parent can be connected to support, and
- support professionals to understand consent issues which can arise when referring a parent.
- Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Adult Board need to work with mental health agencies/professionals to understand and improve the mental health pathway training and to be assured that training includes visual documentation for professional reference at a later date when required.