7 minute briefing

Safeguarding ENFIELD

Relationships matter.

There was also some really good practice where staff developed meaningful relationships with Elly.

Examples included approaching her directly in the community to encourage her to take medication and supporting her personal care.

People who self-neglect often require persistent and consistent work over a period to time. Relationship based practice is key.

A trusting relationship is often the foundation for change.

Who was Elly?

Elly was a highly educated woman with long-term mental health difficulties who repeatedly went missing, rough slept and experienced significant self-neglect.

Between 2015 and 2021 she was reported missing more than 20 times and was admitted to hospital on multiple occasions with severe physical health consequences related to self-neglect. She died in September 2021 after being found suffering from hypothermia, gangrene and sepsis.

You can find the full Safeguarding Adults Review here.

Look for Patterns, Not Incidents

The SAR identified a recurring cycle:

- Elly would disappear for periods of time.
- She would be found seriously unwell.
- She might engage whilst in hospital.
- She would be discharged.
- The cycle would repeat.

In our practice, how can we recognise these patterns and avoid normalising them?



Elly's father consistently raised concerns and highlighted risk.

Family members and carers often:

- recognise changes earliest;
- observe patterns over long periods;
- identify escalation before services do.

Their concerns should be treated as an important source of risk information. This can help to understand the context of what the adult themselves is saying as part of being Professionally Curious.

Recognising Self-neglect as a safeguarding issue.

Notes from multiple professionals talked about Elly making poor decisions and did not recognise this formally as self-neglect.

We should consider safeguarding processes where there is severe self-neglect – and particularly where risk is escalating (or remaining the same) despite professional intervention.

It may also be worth considering a multi-disciplinary panel and/or Enfield SAB High Risk Advisory Panel in such circumstances.

Don't Accept "I'm Fine" Without Testing It

The SAR repeatedly highlights examples where professionals accepted reassurance despite significant evidence to the contrary. Elly often described herself as fine.

Professional Curiosity is a key consideration here. It is important to ask – what evidence do I have about his situation? What am I and other professionals observing over time? What about Mental Capacity and questions about executive function – have these been properly considered?

Risk Assessments

The review picked up inconsistencies around the assessment of risk for Elly. There were occasions when risk was downgraded but Elly's situation appeared not to have changed.

Risk Assessments should be multi-disciplinary and regularly updated in complex cases – including reviewing if current measures are actually reducing the risk.