

## 1. Background

Ms A was 65 years old when she was killed by her daughter.

In June 2020, Ms A's son reported to the police that someone had set fire to his house whilst he and his young family were sleeping. He had been awoken in the early hours of the morning by the alarm of smoke detectors. Five incendiary devices had been placed around the perimeter of his home and he had to put fires out at every one of the exits. Believing this to be the actions of his sister, he raised concern for his mother, with whom he had not had contact for a few days.

## 2. Background continued...

The Police visited Ms A's home address and found Ms B and she admitted having killed her mother and trying to kill her sibling. Ms B was arrested, taken into custody and a criminal investigation commenced.

The domestic homicide review found that agencies only knew part of the picture of Ms A's life and the abuse that she experienced in caring for her daughter and there were missed opportunities to engage with Ms A to assess her needs and the risks that she faced. It did not appear that Ms A necessarily viewed the abuse within the realms of domestic abuse.

## 3. Economic abuse

Ms B was financially dependant on her mother for housing, living costs and funding her substance misuse. Behind Ms A's disclosure of her daughter's financial dependency was a range of economic abuse that had a profound impact upon her life. Economic abuse also rarely takes place in isolation from other forms of abuse (Sharp-Jeffs, 2016).

Research indicates that economic abuse is one of the five interlinked precursors to Adult Family Homicide (Bracewell, 2021:5).

Professionals need to be curious and ask about all forms of economic abuse and coercive control when any indicators are present.

## 8. Key points

- Consider potential economic abuse and its impact where there are mental health/substance misuse/safeguarding concerns for an adult and they are financially dependent on a family member.
- Be professionally curious and don't over rely on parent carers to keep agencies informed of any issues with the well-being of their adult child, always consider the possibility of child-to-parent abuse.
- Carer's assessments should include routine enquiry about domestic abuse.



## 4. Engaging those who misuse substances

Research indicates that perpetrator's mental health and substance misuse is one of the five interlinked precursors to Adult Family Homicide, but agencies commonly experienced difficulties in engaging perpetrators in services (Bracewell, 2021:5).

Practitioners across agencies need skills and techniques to use when faced with an individual with substance misuse issues who is resistant to or fearful of change. Practitioners should retain a positive attitude and belief in change being possible and use every opportunity to motivate individuals to engage with substance misuse services: this requires more than once asking the question and exploration of the barriers that they may face.

## 7. Carers

A carer's assessment is an opportunity to reflect upon the impact that caring has upon an individual's own life rather than the person they care for. It is also an important opportunity to identify the risk of abuse. A carer has a right to their own support requirements being assessed and responded to under the Care Act 2014.

In recent research on domestic homicide reviews, no carer had been offered a carer's assessment (Potter, 2021)

Although the carer's assessment may be carried out by the local authority, it is every agency's responsibility to promote the value of a carer's assessment when they identify carers in their services.

## 6. Rule of optimism

Whilst agencies generally responded swiftly when Ms A raised concerns about her daughter, there nonetheless appeared to be a significant reliance upon her to care for her daughter, to monitor her mental health and alert services when needed. In doing so, it could be seen that there was an over-reliance upon her to manage risk.

It is not uncommon for professionals to place undue confidence in the capacity of families to care for their relatives and manage the risks they face, particularly if the carer is a professional themselves (ADASS, 2021; Bracewell 2021).

## 5. (Adult) Child-to-Parent abuse

Parents of abusing grown-up children will face additional barriers to receiving support and protection. They

- Are less likely to identify their experiences as domestic abuse.
- Are more likely to have lived with abuse for prolonged periods without receiving help and minimise the abuse.
- Are less likely to identify or accept support from police or specialist services.
- May face isolation and may fear disrupting family dynamics.
- Are more likely to have caring responsibilities.
- May have additional vulnerabilities as a result of their own age.

# Ms A Domestic Homicide Review Practitioner Learning Briefing

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