‘Mark & Stephen’ SAR findings Summary

Safeguarding Adults in Brent

Complex Lives and Compounding Needs

Mark and Stephen faced complex challenges, including substance use, declining physical health, cognitive difficulties, and housing instability. Their needs necessitated coordinated and sensitive support beyond traditional systems. Although known to services, they struggled to engage, complicating their care.

Substance Use and Missed Opportunities for Support

Both individuals had long histories of substance or alcohol use. While each had some involvement with drug and alcohol services, the support offered often lacked the intensity and continuity needed to foster trust and sustained recovery. Assertive outreach, residential rehabilitation, and harm reduction were areas where more flexible, accessible services could have made an impact.

Engagement as a Cornerstone of Care

Both men exhibited patterns of refusing care or withdrawing from services. This highlights the importance of understanding non-engagement not as resistance but often as a manifestation of underlying trauma, cognitive difficulties, or unmet needs. A trauma-informed, relationship-centered approach could help services to better understand and reach individuals who are seen as ‘hard to engage.’

Mental Capacity and Decision-Making

There was confusion around whether Mark and Stephen had the capacity to refuse care. Assessments were inconsistent, and professionals may have assumed capacity too readily. The report suggests that professionals may benefit from support in applying the Mental Capacity Act, particularly around concepts like “executive capacity”—the ability not just to decide, but to carry decisions through.

Safeguarding and Escalation Pathways

Concerns about safeguarding were raised but did not lead to effective action. The report highlights gaps in coordination, follow-up, and escalation procedures, calling for stronger protocols to guide professionals when safeguarding is necessary but the individual is unwilling or unable to engage.

Importance of Multi-Agency Collaboration

Mark and Stephen's experiences highlight the necessity for a cohesive multi-agency approach. Regular meetings among key professionals could enhance understanding of their situations, enabling collaborative planning and improved use of legal and clinical resources for their support.

Family Voices and Unseen Carers

Both men had supportive family members, especially sisters, who sought justice after their deaths, yet their roles lacked formal recognition. Families should be regarded as partners in care, receiving emotional support and practical resources as outlined in the Care Act.

Wider Health Considerations

Smoking significantly affected both men’s health, and COVID-19 made care and advocacy more difficult. These wider factors should be considered alongside core support needs. particularly in Stephen’s case, made it harder for family members to advocate and for services to respond as needed.