

### OVERVIEW

Professionals from housing, health, police and adult social care came together following Leonard's death to reflect on the practice that shaped his support. Although the case did not meet the threshold for a statutory Safeguarding Adults Review, the Isle of Wight Safeguarding Adults Board recognised several examples of effective, proactive partnership working that practitioners can build on.

This case demonstrates how trusted relationships, consistent engagement, coordinated intelligence-sharing, and trauma-informed practice can help reduce risk for adults experiencing exploitation, substance use, and social isolation.

### SUMMARY OF THE CASE

Leonard, aged 61, was a former mechanic who experienced a gradual decline in his wellbeing due to the combined impact of relationship breakdown, loss of family contact and dependency on alcohol. After leaving shared accommodation, he moved in with David, a Southern Housing tenant.

Although the property was associated with antisocial and criminal activity, professionals recognised that the relationship between Leonard and David had mutually protective features. David, who had been repeatedly targeted by drug dealers, was less vulnerable when Leonard was present.

Leonard maintained consistent and positive engagement with adult social care and other agencies. Practitioners described him as warm, intelligent and open to support, particularly when approached in a trauma-informed manner that recognised the impact of fluctuating capacity and alcohol use.

### KEY FINDINGS – WHAT WORKED WELL:

✓ **Trusted peer relationships can offer real protection**

Leonard's presence reduced David's vulnerability to exploitation. Practitioners recognised the importance of these natural protective factors and worked with, rather than against, the relationship.

✓ **Early, coordinated responses are essential in adult exploitation**

The property had a history of drug-related exploitation. Housing and police colleagues maintained ongoing communication and undertook joint visits, helping to disrupt activity and monitor escalating concerns.

✓ **Trauma-informed, person-centred practice enhanced engagement**

Leonard responded positively to support when practitioners used empathy, consistency and clear communication. Approaches that acknowledged trauma and avoided judgment helped maintain trust.

✓ **Professional curiosity remained strong across agencies**

Practitioners noticed changes in Leonard's presentation, particularly linked to alcohol use, and responded appropriately. Their curiosity ensured that risk was neither minimised nor overlooked.

✓ **Housing providers play a pivotal safeguarding role**

Southern Housing proactively shared intelligence and collaborated closely with police and adult social care. This case highlights the value of housing-led vigilance in identifying early signs of exploitation.

✓ **Regular multi-agency information-sharing enhances safety**

Monthly meetings between housing providers now support earlier identification of risk, improved disruption of criminal activity, and more coordinated safeguarding responses.

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR PRACTICE:

➤ **Recognise indicators of exploitation and cuckooing**

Look for patterns such as unexplained visitors, property deterioration, antisocial behaviour or neighbour concerns. Share observations promptly.

➤ **Maintain a trauma-informed approach**

Understand that behaviours may be coping strategies. Use consistency, clear boundaries and empathy to build trust.

➤ **Prioritise relationship-based practice**

Identify existing protective relationships and support the adult to strengthen them where safe and appropriate.

➤ **Share information early and through the right channels**

Use local forums and safeguarding pathways to prevent escalation.

➤ **Use safeguarding procedures confidently**

Where exploitation or coercion is suspected, consider:

- Safeguarding Adults referrals
- Multi-Agency Risk Management or similar local forums
- Police intelligence submissions
- Disruption tactics

➤ **Be professionally curious**

If something feels out of place, explore it respectfully. Persistence can significantly increase safety for adults whose circumstances fluctuate.

➤ **Recognise the role of housing in safeguarding**

Housing officers often see emerging signs sooner than other services. Engage them as essential safeguarding partners.

## LINKS FOR BEST PRACTICE AND FURTHER LEARNING

[4LSAB Guidance: Exploitation and Cuckooing](#)

[4LSAB Safeguarding Concerns Guidance](#)

[4LSAB Multi-Agency Guidance on Information Sharing](#)

[4LSAB Multi-Agency Risk Management Framework](#)