



## **'T' Case Study – Self-Neglect and Hoarding**

### **T's Story**

T lived alone with his dog, in a Council owned property for over 40 years.

He had a serious long-term health condition which was gradually worsening and severely affected his health and mobility. The condition of T's property gradually deteriorated as his health diminished, to a point where it was described as unfit for human habitation.

T had close family locally who helped when they could, but the magnitude of the situation was beyond what they were able to resolve. T's sister lived thousands of miles away but phoned weekly, and a neighbour helped as much as she could. T was not receiving Social Care Services until 3 years before his death, although he first came to their attention nearly 20 years ago.

T's dog caused issues because he fouled inside the property. Social Workers felt that the environment was beyond cleaning, so the focus was on rehousing, but this was taking time, as no suitable properties accepting T and his dog could be found. Other options were being explored to rehome the dog towards the end of T's life.

Housing officers worked closely with T over a lengthy period and often felt frustrated about not being able to improve outcomes for him. They were aware that he had mental capacity and was entitled to make his own decisions and live how he chose.

They expressed concerns that the winter months were approaching, and T had no heating or hot water. T was a proud independent man, who often overstated what he could do, including saying he would go to the shops to buy a heater during the winter but he was physically unable to achieve this. He was banned from many shops in the local town due to his unkempt condition.

T died of natural causes at home, contributed to by self-neglect and poor housing aged in his mid-60s.

The coroner stated that T made lifestyle choices; he was reclusive but independent and had mental capacity, so his decisions could not be legally overridden.

The coroner also stated that there was a balance between what made T happy and what made him safe. He felt that those intervening did all they could to help him.

### **What went well?**

- Generally, there was good communications between Adult Service, Housing and Environmental Health colleagues.
- His neighbour was very supportive. She acted as an unofficial advocate.
- There was extensive support and engagement from Housing colleagues who did all they could to help and support T.

### **What were we worried about?**

- T regularly overstated what he could do, leading to concerns around executive capacity e.g. offering to buy a heater when he had limited physical capacity and was banned from many shops. He said he used the toilet, but it was blocked by his mobility scooter.
- T's refusal to rehome his dog, limited his housing options. However, the housing officer had engaged with an external organisation and T was considering letting them take care of his dog. Sadly, he died before this happened.
- The Housing Officer sometimes felt isolated in dealing with this case, particularly in the early involvement. They were unaware of the Professional Consultation line in the MASH which can be used for advice.
- Despite his medical condition there was no evidence that T had been seen by his GP since 2009.

### **What is the learning from this case?**

- An earlier referral to the MASH and a self-neglect and hoarding referral could have resulted in an earlier multi agency strategy discussion.
- Partners should be aware that there is now a Self-Neglect and Hoarding (SNH) risk assessment tool. This assesses health, environment, self-care, nutrition etc. within the SNH policy.
- The referral form and risk assessment can be found here - <https://www.suffolkas.org/working-with-adults/policies-and-procedures/>
- Multi-agency case conferences are now held for customers who are self-neglecting and hoarding where appropriate. The case conferences will provide the opportunity to review mental capacity assessment and executive decision making.
- Resources are available to adults who struggle to heat their homes through schemes such as Warm home Healthy People - <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/community-and-safety/warm-homes-healthy-people/>