

The case of Claire Jones

Background

Claire Jones is 92 years old, and lives in her own home supported by carers who visit three times a day. The carers help Claire with her personal care, as well as preparing meals. Claire is in relatively good physical health for her age, but is extremely confused and forgetful, and sometimes leaves her front door open during the day and does not close her windows at night.

Claire has a son Michael who lives in the same village, and a daughter Samatha who lives an hour away. Claire's children visit her regularly, and have reported to Clare's GP that they are concerned that local children are stealing from her, as money and jewellery have gone missing from the property and they know that local children visit her at home. Michael in particular is worried about the emotional impact on Claire of losing jewellery with sentimental value. Both children are keen that Claire should remain in her own home and live independently for as long as possible, but worry that she may be safer living in a care home in case the situation escalates.

Questions

What are the key concerns you have about this case?

Do you think Claire is having possessions stolen? What other explanations could there be for the missing money and jewellery?

What would you do next?

In this instance, the GP informed the multi-disciplinary team who gathered further information

Claire was someone known to the primary care service staff, as she receives regular reviews following a hospital admission six months ago. The GP reported Claire's children's concerns to the social worker on the multi-disciplinary team, and asked the occupational therapists to make a home visit to try to find out more information. Claire knew that money and jewellery had gone missing, but did not think they had been stolen by local children as she did not think they would steal from her.

After speaking to Claire's neighbours, it seems that there have been a number of instances of children knocking at the front door, whilst others enter the property via the kitchen. The neighbours were not able to identify the children, and were reluctant to report their concerns formally to the police as they did not want to become a target for local gangs.

Questions

Have your thoughts about the case changed after hearing the new information?

What would you do next?

The multi-disciplinary team contacted the police

The police were contacted about the situation, but because Claire had cognitive problems she was not seen to be a reliable witness. The neighbours were also contacted informally by the police, but they were not able to give a good description of any of the children suspected of entering the property. Because of the lack of firm evidence about what was happening, the police were not able to take the case further.

Claire's son in the mean time visited her more often to act as a deterrent, but as he worked full-time he was not able to be at the property 24-hours a day. The children were both very worried about what was happening when they were not there.

Questions

What would you identify as the key challenges in this case in terms of establishing evidence as to what had happened?

How would you prevent Claire being a future target of financial abuse?

Actions taken to prevent further abuse

To avoid Claire being admitted into nursing or residential care, the multi-disciplinary team met with Claire's children and discussed a variety of ways to make Claire safer and more secure at home. Prompts were stuck on the back of the door, saying 'Claire, please make sure the door is locked'. The use of telecare systems was also explored, which notify a central office if the door was left open for longer than a certain period of time. If the alarm was triggered, someone would phone Claire to prompt her to make sure the door was closed and locked.

Claire's children felt reassured after the telecare system was installed, and Claire was able to stay in her own home for a number of years until her health deteriorated, with no further instances of money or jewellery going missing.