



SAR Edward

Theme: Working with people with a mental illness where there are concerns around cuckooing

Who was Edward?

Edward was a 35-year-old man who had a keen interest in cookery and music, played several musical instruments and had a foundation degree in 'Popular Music'.

Edward was murdered by two 17-year-olds. A criminal trial concluded that the young men were previously unknown to him, and they were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Edward was financially secure, owned his own flat and worked in a local supermarket. He lived on his own, and he was generous with people whom he believed were his friends. Edward was befriended by several young people over a prolonged period, who used his flat to prepare and deal drugs. Edward thought these people were his friends but admitted to professionals that he feared them. Whatever the reasons that attracted young people to Edward's home, it led to a significant decline in his life, contributed to his increased drug use, his deteriorating mental health, and significant behaviour change.

Edward was known to have a mental illness and had been referred to mental health services; he was diagnosed as having schizophrenia. Edward was supported by a Care Coordinator from the Community Mental Health Team, but this support was limited. Concerns around Edward being cuckooed were raised in 2020. Edward made 2 self-referrals to Addiction Services, but did not respond to follow-up support. Despite support from his family, Edward did not have the ability to manage his finances and by 2021, was known to be using foodbanks.

Cuckooing

The Government's anticipated Crime & Policing Bill will make Cuckooing illegal, [Child criminal exploitation and cuckooing to be criminal offences - GOV.UK](#). However, there is currently no legislation that police can use to prosecute against this form of exploitation. Cuckooing is described as "a practice where people take over a person's home & use the property to facilitate exploitation". (Cuckooing. A joint approach – National County Lines Coordination Centre.)

In relation to Edward, it was believed that young people were using his house for drug dealing. Victims of cuckooing may also experience criminality such as violence, sexual violence and theft.

Key Learning Point 1 – A systems understanding of cuckooing

Cuckooing is currently not a criminal offence. It is important that professionals working across the system have an understanding of and legal literacy regarding cuckooing. There is often an assumption by professionals that making a referral to the Police would lead to a criminal investigation. Professionals should ensure that if the police are not investigating the case in relation to other offences, additional support should be provided and required by victims, from agencies such as substance misuse providers, community mental health teams or GPs and to ensure valuable information is not missed or not shared.

Key Learning point 2 – Recognising and responding to trauma as a result of exploitation

Many victims of cuckooing, particularly those who are being exploited by associates whom they believe are friends do not recognise that they are victims. Victims can also feel embarrassed at what is happening to them and may want to downplay their experience. Professionals who visited Edward were aware that he was being exploited, but at that stage this information was not shared. The use of the Multi-agency Risk Management process (MARM) is one way that all agencies could have shared information to have supported Edward. Early identification and assessment of the risk to people like Edward, needs to be undertaken early together with a prompt multi-agency response.

Key Learning Point 3 – Challenges for agencies supporting people who are homeowners and financially stable

Where a potential victim owns their own home and is financially stable, partners need to consider how to support them. Anti-Social Behaviour legislation can be helpful but must not be used in such a way that treats the victim as a potential perpetrator. A multi-agency approach is equally important to this cohort of people and the same principles e.g. early identification of risk, assessment and response apply.

Key Learning Point 4 – Supporting people who do not engage with services

Many victims will mistrust statutory agencies and will not be consistent in their engagement. At times they will only engage when their life has reached a critical stage, and they need immediate help. They may also be discouraged or threatened by perpetrators not to contact agencies such as the Police, therefore their behaviours may be an indicator that they are not in control of their own lives.

Documents that might provide additional information

Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM) Guidance [MARM Guidance](#)

Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM) Summary Guidance [MARM Summary Guidance](#)

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Adults Procedure <https://creativestudios.myzen.co.uk/bcpsab/BCP-Dorset-procedures/>

SAR Edward can be found at: [Safeguarding Adults Review Edward](#)

For advice or to raise an adult safeguarding concern:

Dorset Council area call 01305 221016

BCP Council area call 01202 123654

