

Agincare

Learning from and safeguarding against elder financial abuse

Agincare provide care and support through domiciliary care, live-in care, care homes and home cuisine services across England. They support people with a range of conditions including Alzheimer's, diabetes, bipolar disease, Parkinson's and learning disabilities.

Last year, a worker previously employed at Agincare was prosecuted and convicted for theft from an older couple.

As an organisation, Agincare learned that no matter how much the majority of their workers cared deeply about what they do, there is an ever-present danger of rogue individuals taking advantage of their position and subjecting others to abuse. They learned a lot from their experience and in response, reviewed their systems and structures to minimise the opportunity for such people in the future.

CEO Raina Summerson says it's important to take time to reflect on situations and learn from them.

"We learned that despite caring, our working lives are so busy and with such daily complexities, there is a risk that we move on too quickly from situations that really require much better reflection and learning from.

Sometimes as a result, we stop fighting as hard as we should for what is right; in this case, fighting a system that doesn't encourage collaboration, that doesn't seem to want to pursue even seemingly clear abusive acts under a criminal process and that can effectively punish the victim."

The investigation stages

They learned that the system that's designed to protect people from abuse, can also lead to confusion, especially during investigatory stages and the aftercare of everyone involved.

Throughout the investigation, the system didn't encourage open, honest conversations between affected parties, including Agincare, the victims and their family.

At the time, this was difficult for the family and their daughters as they didn't understand why Agincare hadn't been in touch. After they wrote a letter to Raina Summerson she met them and explained Agincare's position, actions taken and policies and systems, which helped them understand the situation better.

As a result of these conversations, Agincare have changed their policy to ensure that people are asked if they want to meet to discuss the case and ensure better follow-up care is provided for all.



Working together

Raina also invited the family to attend one of their national home care manager events. At the event, the family worked with managers to review the incident and they did an honest appraisal of what everyone could have done better to minimise the impact of the event.

They've also improved their training for staff to help them understand more about the fine line between promoting choice and self-determination and risk-taking, and have worked with people who need care and support to help them realise that professional boundaries are there to protect not just them but others.

Moving forward

Raina says:

We need to continue to advise and support our workforce, those we can for and their families, about risks and judgement.

They try to achieve this through values-based recruitment, Disclosure and Barring Service checks, training, clear professional boundaries and information and guidance for all staff.

She also thinks as a sector, we need to get better at reporting things 'just in case', unless it drives fear and loathing of a much-maligned, committed and caring workforce and stops people joining social and health care as a result.

Our CEO, Sharon Allen commends Raina for her open and honest reflection on this experience.

"Huge thanks and credit to Raina and the family for being willing to share this learning through a painful and distressing experience. This is the leadership our sector needs, transparency and being proactive about putting things right when we get them wrong, as we all do from time to time. The real gem in here is the focus on the relationship between Raina and her organisation and the family members, all focused on sharing learning."

Skills for Care recommends

We have lots of resources to support employers with their safeguarding practices and help them develop the skills and knowledge of their staff.

Adult safeguarding

These resources can help you ensure your workforce have the right skills and knowledge regarding adult safeguarding.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/safeguarding

Supporting people with learning disabilities

These resources can help you support your workforce to care for people with a learning disability including guidance about positive behavioural support.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/learningdisability

Restrictive practices

This guide supports employers who want to minimise the use of restrictive practices.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/restrictivepractices