

Case Study Eight: Mrs C – Improvements to accommodation

Summary

Mrs C had damp in her room which was serious enough to constitute a risk to her health, but did not see the need for it to be dealt with as she believed she would only be living there for a short amount of time. The care home did not have a comprehensive understanding of the Mental Capacity Act and believed that they could not force her to allow the necessary repairs as it would be infringing upon her rights. After intervention by an IMCA the decision was made to go ahead with the repair work and Mrs C seemed satisfied with the improvements to her room.

Background

A best interests decision needed to be made about Mrs C, an eccentric lady originally from abroad, to decide where she resides. She has mental health issues, mostly apparent in the grandiose ideation she expresses and is supported in a care home, in the area where she has lived most her life.

As a result of knowing the area Mrs C can independently access the community that she knows and cherishes, although she can be somewhat disorientated on occasion.

IMCA report

'I met with Mrs C to try to ascertain her views on remaining living at the care home. She did not think she would be there long-term and said she will be going to her property; hence discussion around the subject became difficult. However, the information she provided about the care there, my observation of her room and her interaction with the manager all evidenced that she was content there and had settled in.

Her room was quite cluttered and there appeared to be some damp on the ceiling which I spoke to her about as well as the manager. Mrs C did not want any action to be taken, she could not see this was a problem and the manager did not feel he could interfere. The case remained open whilst we were awaiting further information about her property from Environmental Health to find out if returning home would be an option.

On my second visit some time later, the odour in Mrs C's room was very strong and unpleasant. A rug in her room was wet and dirty. Whereas the ceiling first had a small damp patch, I now observed several large grey areas of damp/mould.

Mrs C did not think the poor state of her room was an issue, assuring me: "I'm not going to be here that long. I'm getting my house done". Claire did not appear to understand that living in damp conditions can have an adverse effect on her health.'

Barriers which were overcome

The manager was alerted to the IMCA's concerns and asked what action he was going to take. The manager appeared to have a lack of understanding of when to make a best interests decision, when someone's best interests outweigh what is in line with their views.

He seemed to think he could not override her views even in instances where she lacked capacity to make the decision herself. As a result of this, a safeguarding alert was made to the local authority.

Outcome

Within three days of the IMCA's visit Mrs C's room was de-cluttered, cleaned and re-decorated. When the IMCA followed up a few days later, Claire was observed to be happy with the changes.