

## Case study: Unwise decisions

*Someone making a very risky decision showed how hesitant services can be to accept people's right to be unwise*

Harry, a young man with Asperger's Syndrome, was a keen online gamer, and loved going to gaming conventions. A major one was coming up in Washington, DC, and Harry really wanted to go. But Harry had in the past been convicted of minor drug offences, and was worried that he wouldn't therefore be allowed into the US. His plan, therefore, was simply not to tell anyone, and hope he'd get away with it. He also didn't have enough money to afford a hotel in Washington, and planned to sleep rough when he was there, or befriend some other gamers and hope he could stay with them.

The social work team supporting him felt that these were very unwise decisions. His social worker worked hard to persuade him not to go, and liaised closely with the local authority's MCA lead to discuss options. But it was clear that Harry had the mental capacity to make the decisions, risky though they were. There was nothing more that the social work team could do apart from minimise the risk – giving Harry contact numbers for the British Embassy, supporting him to apply to charities for money and so on. But the matter was run past the Director of Adult Services for his approval, reflecting how hard it can sometimes be for local authorities to really get the unwise decision principle of the MCA.

In the end, regrettably for Harry, but prompting a collective sigh of relief among the social work team, Harry couldn't raise enough money even for the air fare, and had to miss the convention.