

## STATEMENT

### SSAB Independent Chair, Sue Redmond

Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) has chosen to publish a “Thematic Review” to support ongoing learning that will impact and support changes. This Thematic Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) seeks to learn lessons from the circumstances surrounding the deaths of two people, Richard and Patricia who despite being very different individuals, who were loved in turn by their own families, there are similarities in terms of how they were responded to by services and the learning for us all. I particularly want to reference what has been reported as diagnostic overshadowing which means simply that deteriorations in their health were attributed to the learning disability and or mental health rather than understanding the persons as a whole.

SSAB worked closely with both families to support them to identify the questions they wanted addressing and involve them with the support of the lead reviewer and the lead officer. In shaping the terms of reference and desired outcomes from the review.

This engagement was key for both families who previously had potentially not felt heard and were keen to ensure the learning identified was both appropriate and meaningful. Both family representatives, though very distressed at the loss of their loved ones, were keen to be involved in the process in this way and acknowledged that they had been given a voice.

Board members and I would like to express our sincere condolences to Richard and Patricia’s families and thank them for their contributions to this report, the questions identified and learning materials.

These words, taken from the impact statement prepared by Richard’s aunt, show the effect of his death on his loved ones.

*Unfortunately, no-one listened to us as a family.*

*His only wish was to be told where he was going to live for the rest of his life. He gave up the will to live before we could tell him.*

*He had 24/7 ‘care’ from hospital staff and an external care agency which was funded by Social Services and he still managed to lose his life.*

*If people had taken the time to get to know Richard, know his background and why his behaviour had deteriorated so much and listened to what he wanted – Richard would be alive today.*

*I am the one left feeling that I ‘failed’ to protect Richard, ‘failed’ to ensure he got the treatment and help he deserved to enable him to carry on with his life. It should not be that way.*

The leaders of the organisations on the SSAB have accepted and agreed to take forward all the recommendations from this review. The report has emphasised the importance of understanding the person, the context of their life and what is important to and for them.

Progress on recommendations is being made, particularly with reference to effective communication reasonable adjustments and working effectively together.

I would like to thank all professionals who have taken part in this review to help partners continue improving the services and support they provide to adults with needs for care and support and their families, living in Sandwell.