

Duty of Candour

Social care scenario - Transcription

Pennie Taylor, Pennie Taylor Communications: 'In this scenario we're seeing a conversation that's taking place following a review into an incident where the Duty of Candour procedure has been invoked.

Support for You Housing Support Service is a registered care service with the Care Inspectorate. Johnny is 27 years of age and has a learning disability, limited communication skills and poor mobility. He lives in a first floor, main door flat. Johnny has unsteady gait and is prone to falls. He is supported by the service to live safely and independently in the community. Johnny receives 24 hour support from housing support workers within his own home. He has a personal support plan that has been recently updated to include the use of a stair gate, as Johnny has started wandering during the night.

The service is short staffed due to sickness, and it's Jenny who is a relief social care worker who's on the waking night shift. Jenny has only worked for the service for a couple of months and has supported Johnny on one previous occasion. When Jenny arrives to do her night shift, Johnny has settled, and already in bed so, after the handover meeting with the day shift worker, Jenny goes to sleep in the waking night room. Jenny wakes, having heard a loud bang and crying. Immediately she goes to check on Johnny and sees that the stair gate is open and that Johnny has fallen down the stairs.

Jenny tries to ascertain if Johnny is okay, however he is extremely distressed and crying, and lashes out at her. Jenny's unsure what to do to calm the situation, and searches through the support plan for details of who she can call for support and advice. It takes her several calls to get in touch with the right person as there's no information on file about which manager's on call. The manager asks Jenny if she's called an ambulance...Jenny hasn't. She doesn't know if Johnny's hurt and can't get him to calm down enough to tell her if he's okay.

It's 45 minutes after the fall before Jenny calls for an ambulance. At the hospital, test results have shown significant damage to Johnny's spine and spinal cord, as a direct result of the fall down stairs, which means he'll be unable to walk again and can only mobilise using a wheelchair. Johnny's unable to return to his home as it's not accessible for a wheelchair.

Kate's review into the incident reveals that Jenny failed to carry out the required safety checks and did not double-check the stair gate was properly secured before going to bed. Jenny had not familiarised herself with the support plan when coming on shift, and wasn't aware of the new bedtime safety checks. Her induction hadn't provided her with telephone contacts in case of emergency, or protocols to use if an emergency were to arise

during her shift. The review also revealed that the handover between the two workers didn't include significant information that should have been passed on.

Kate has invited Johnny's parents in to discuss her review of the incident. Because he lacks capacity Johnny is unable to participate in the review meeting.

While you are watching this conversation, you should consider what's being said, and how it's being said, the environment it takes place in, and whether anything could be improved.'

Kate: 'Hi there, you must be Johnny's parents.'

Sean: 'Hi there, I'm Sean and this is Agnes and, you know, we're here today to find out exactly what happened to Johnny. We don't want fobbed off with any old information...we need to know what happened.'

Kate: 'I understand that, and I do want to share with you what we've learned from the review. Now, as you're aware, we recently updated Jonny's support plan to include the use of a stair gate and that was because we found he was wandering during the night, so he needed that for his safety. Now, unfortunately, during the handover this information wasn't passed over, and the worker on shift didn't realise that she had to check this. So, unfortunately, when Johnny did get up during the night and he did wander, the gate wasn't closed or locked and he was able to get through the gate and he unfortunately fell down the stairs. Now, this worker was a relatively new member of staff and she was also one of our relief workers. Now, as you know, we usually have allocated workers who provide consistent support to Johnny, however, due to staff shortages, due to illness, we have had to use relief workers. Unfortunately there was also a delay in calling an ambulance because the worker didn't know what to do in an emergency, and she was trying to speak with a senior member of staff.'

Agnes: 'I still don't understand, you know, how could she not know where to find the information and how did she not think of checking the stair gate...you know, I just don't get it, I don't understand.'

Kate: 'Unfortunately, it was a breakdown in communication. The information wasn't passed over during the handover, and the staff member will be receiving further training in handovers, and ensuring that she reads personal support plans and doesn't just rely on handovers. We'll also be providing further training and information in what to do in an emergency. We've discovered from our review that our induction plan doesn't include those issues, and we need to include that in our induction plan for new relief workers.'

Sean: 'So, all this could have been avoided if people had just spoken to each other and communicated?'

Kate: 'Yes, I'm afraid it could have been.'

Agnes: 'So, basically, you're just telling us that our son's going to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair. He's going to have to leave his house, a house that he's loved living in, that he's enjoyed living in...you know, I'm just not happy with this at all, I'm very angry, and I think it's actually appalling.'

Sean: 'And he'd settled in really well there into that house, and now he's going to have to move to a completely new home and he's going to need to get more care.'

Kate: 'I understand, and we will work with Johnny's care manager, who will undertake an assessment of his care needs, and with the housing association to identify somewhere appropriate to meet those needs. We'll also,

when he's ready to come home from the hospital, we'll work with him to help him settle. We're also reviewing our policies and procedures about what to do in an emergency.'

Sean: 'I mean, that's the thing I don't understand how this can happen when you have policies and procedures in place... I mean, we need to see those, and we need to know what's happened, and see what happens when you change those policies.'

Kate: 'Absolutely, we're happy to share those with you when we've made the necessary amendments.'

Agnes: 'I should think so.'

Sean: 'And, you know, what about the members of staff...what about the staff involved? I mean, we don't want them anywhere near Johnny again.'

Kate: 'They will receive further training and close monitoring to make sure that they can provide appropriate support to Johnny. I will do my best to make sure that they aren't on shift, but I can't guarantee that just because of staff shortage and sickness, so they may have to come on shift in those situations.'

Sean: 'Well, then and only then, because if Johnny sees them and Johnny remembers what's happened, I don't know how he's going to react.'

Agnes: 'No, I don't think that's good enough, I'm not happy with that.'

Kate: 'I understand, and I will do my best to meet that request but, as I said, I cannot guarantee that at this time. Is there anything else you want to ask at this time?'

Agnes: 'Well, not just right now, no, but are you going to be available if we have questions in the future? I mean, we want answers to these questions.'

Kate: 'Yes, and you'll find my number at the top of the letter that I sent out to you, and if I'm not in the office I will get back to you.'

Agnes: 'Mmmm.'

Sean: 'Okay.'

Kate: 'Well, thank you very much for your time and understanding today.'

Pennie Taylor, Pennie Taylor Communications: 'So, how did Kate do? Did she do well, or could what she says, and how she says it, be improved? Are there other things that could be improved in the situation? Let's watch this conversation again. See if you notice anything that has changed. If you do, what difference might this make?'

Kate: 'Hi there, you must be Johnny's parents. I'm Kate Newman, I'm one of the senior managers within the organisation and I also led the review into what happened to Johnny.'

Sean: 'I'm Sean, this is Agnes, and we're here today to find out exactly what happened to Johnny. We don't want

fobbed off with any old information... we need to know what happened.'

Kate: 'I understand and, first of all, I want to say how sorry I am for the harm that we've caused to Johnny, and for the distress that's caused both of you as well. We as an organisation have a duty to be open and honest when things go wrong, and I will be telling you exactly what we've learned from the review.'

Agnes: 'Okay, well, that's what we're here for. We just need to know what's happened to Johnny, and how could something like that happen.'

Kate: 'I completely understand. Now, as you're aware, what we had noticed recently is that Johnny's actually wandering during the night, so we'd arranged for a safety gate to be put into his home to promote his safety. Now, we also updated his personal support plan to reflect this change, and that it should be passed on during handovers. We also added that it should form part of the safety checks before Johnny is settled for the evening. Now, unfortunately, on the evening in question, the information wasn't passed over during the handover and Johnny was already settled for the evening so the necessary safety checks weren't actually undertaken. So that meant that, when Johnny did get up during the night and did wander, the gate wasn't closed and secure, and as such he was able to get through the gate and he did fall down the stairs, unfortunately.'

Sean: 'Why was this not checked? Why did the worker not check everything? I thought this was part of the routine.'

Kate: 'It should have been routine but, unfortunately, it didn't happen on this occasion. Staff will be receiving further training on proper, effective handovers, and in making sure that they do read personal support plans to ensure the safety of our clients.'

Agnes: 'Yes, well, that's all very good, but I still don't understand how it took this worker so long to call the ambulance.'

Kate: 'Unfortunately she wasn't aware of the routine, protocols and practice in place for when there's an emergency. She couldn't find out from Johnny whether he was hurt or not because he was agitated, and she didn't know whether to phone an ambulance or not. Now, we as an organisation take responsibility for her not knowing what to do. We've identified that our induction programme doesn't include emergency plans, so we have developed that so it will include emergency plans. We'll also develop an emergency plan for each of our clients, and that'll be put within the personal support plan, and we'll detail information such as emergency contacts such as yourself, and the details of the on-call manager. We will have one designated mobile number for a worker to call should there be an emergency, and that will take them through to whoever is on duty at that particular time.'

Agnes: 'How did this worker not know where to find the information, and to check the stair gate? I mean, I'm still not sure I understand how that could happen.'

Kate: 'Unfortunately, there was a breakdown in communication, and the information about the stair gate wasn't actually passed over. The staff will receive further training on proper handovers, and ensuring that they are familiar with support plans in order to promote the safety of our service users.'

Sean: 'I mean, how can we be sure that this isn't going to happen again to somebody else?'

Kate: 'I want to try and reassure you that we have learned from what happened to Johnny, and we have shared that learning with relevant staff members. We have updated our training and our induction, for not just new staff members but current staff members as well, and we will be working on reviewing our policies and procedures to ensure that staff are aware of these issues so that they can support all of our clients safely during their shift.'

Agnes: 'So, yes, but basically what you are saying is our son is now confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his days. He will have to leave his house, which he enjoyed living in and he loved. You know, I'm very angry about this. I am not happy. I think it's appalling, and I am angry about this.'

Sean: 'He was really settled there... he's now going to have to move, he's going to have to move to a new home, and he's going to need even more care.'

Kate: 'I'm truly sorry for the harm that we've caused Johnny, and for the upheaval. To reassure you, we will be working with Johnny's care manager, who will be undertaking an assessment of Johnny's care needs, and with the housing association to make sure we identify somewhere suitable to meet those care needs. And, when he is ready to come home from the hospital, we will work with him to get him settled as well.'

Sean: 'You've got the policies and procedures in place, you know, and we need to see these. We need to see the policies and procedures...we need to know what's been changed and we need to know how it's been changed.'

Kate: 'Of course, and I'm happy to share these with you, and actually perhaps both of you would be willing to take part in making those amendments and improvements?'

Sean: 'Yes, well, I mean I would like to, but also I would like people to know what the impact something like this has on a family.'

Kate: 'Yes, of course, and perhaps in the future when you're ready, both of you would be willing to come in and share your thoughts and feelings about the incident with us and we could record them and pass them over to our staff members and, what that would do is, that would let our staff know the real impact of such an incident on relatives and on the individual themselves.'

Agnes: 'Yes, I think that's really important, and I certainly would be happy to participate, and probably you would be as well.'

Sean: 'Yes.'

Agnes: 'People have to understand the impact that something like that has on a family and, you know, for Johnny, his whole life has been turned upside down.'

Sean: 'Yes, what's going to happen to the staff that were involved in this? Because we certainly don't want them working with Johnny again.'

Kate: 'I understand, and the staff will receive further training and they will be closely monitored over the next few months to make sure that they are confident in dealing with all situations. Now, I'll try my best to make sure that the staff aren't involved in providing Johnny's care, however, I have to say that I can't guarantee that at this time, and that's because of our staff shortages that we're experiencing at this time.'

Sean: 'Well, as long as it's then and only then because, you know, if Johnny remembers what's happened and he sees them I don't know how he'll react.'

Kate: 'Of course, and I will try my very best to honour that request but, as I say, I cannot guarantee it at this time. Is there anything else that you would like to ask, or anything further you want to discuss at this point?'

Agnes: 'I don't have any more questions, but we may have questions later. Will you make yourself available to answer what we need to know at the time?'

Kate: 'Of course, and you can contact me on my telephone number...I'll give you my card actually. So, this has my contact details on it – you can contact me at any time but, if I am out of the office, please do leave a message and I will get back to you. And, just to confirm, I'll also be sending you out a letter detailing the outcome of the review as we've discussed today.'

Agnes: 'Okay, thanks.'

Sean: 'Okay. Thank you.'

Kate: 'Well, thanks again for your time and your understanding, and please, once again, my sincere apologies for the harm that we've caused Johnny and for the distress that's caused both of you. I'm very sorry.'

Sean: 'Okay.'

Agnes: 'Thanks Kate.'

Pennie Taylor, Pennie Taylor Communications: 'How do you think Kate did this time? What did she say that was different? Did she do anything differently? How did this help the whole conversation? These are all the things you need to consider when you're having a conversation with people following a review into an incident where the Duty of Candour procedure has been invoked. How might you prepare for similar conversations?'