



## Case study

### Fatima: resolving family disagreements and getting good care

#### 1 Background

Fatima is in her late 50s and has terminal brain cancer. The tumour has affected her mental capacity; she is often delirious and unable to make decisions for herself. She lives on her own and is looked after by agency carers who come every day. She has three daughters; Aisha and Sadiya live locally and visit often, while Rabiya is based in the Midlands, and comes to stay occasionally.

Fatima's carers raised a safeguarding concern when they witnessed a heated argument between two of the daughters in front of Fatima. Rabiya was criticising how their mother was being cared for and insisting that changes were made. This angered Sadiya, who felt her sister didn't have the right to criticise or make changes when she was hardly there. They were shouting at each other, and this was clearly upsetting. Fatima. She didn't really understand what was going on, but was scared and agitated.

The carers felt this atmosphere was a serious risk to her mental health. The case was referred to The Advocacy Project.

#### 2 The process

Our advocate, Nick, arranged to meet the sisters at Fatima's house. He brought up the subject of their strained relationship and pointed out the distress this was causing their mother.

While he was there, Nick noticed several other things that made him uneasy. There was medication lying on the floor, the bed was unmade and Fatima looked dishevelled – her hair hadn't been brushed and she was still in her night clothes even though it was midday. He looked for her care and support plan. Usually, this would be a ring binder with details of the care needed by the client, along with personal information about their likes, dislikes and any special needs. This acts as a reference point for visiting health and social care professionals, such as nurses or social workers. Instead, Nick found a few scrappy sheets of paper with some scrawled notes.

The sisters told Nick they had complained to the social worker about the care agency, but no action had been taken. Nick then talked to the local authority and raised his own safeguarding concern about the care agency.

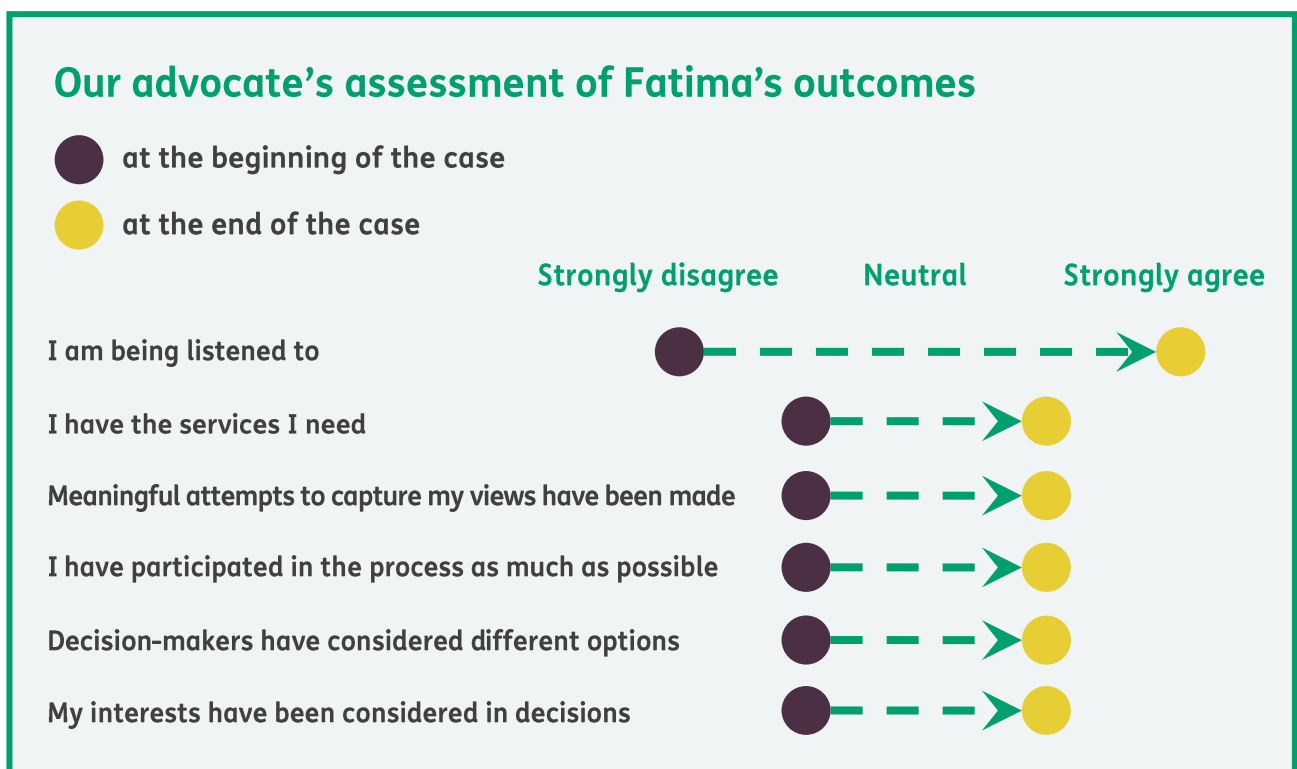
### 3 Outcomes

Nick had several meetings with the care agency and social services, in which he emphasised the unsatisfactory level of care Fatima was receiving. He knew the care agency from some of the other service users he worked with, who had also had bad experiences. He was concerned the agency had systemic issues, which he alerted to the local authority. Fatima was allocated new carers, who were more conscientious and the situation improved.

Mindful of the effect the discord between them had on their mother, the sisters found a way to manage their relationship so that the atmosphere was more harmonious; Aisha and Sadiya agreed to stay away when Rabiya came to visit. This meant Fatima was able see her daughters, but didn't have to listen to them yelling at each other.

These changes had a significant impact on Fatima's quality of life; her home was clean and tidy, and she seemed happier and more relaxed.

The sisters are now more aware of their rights under the Care Act, and how different agencies can support them. Although Nick had to have some difficult conversations with Aisha, Sadiya and Rabiya, they appreciated his involvement and still call him to let him know how their mum is doing.



### 4 Systemic issues

Fatima's case highlights how there can be several interweaving issues in a case, and the advocates' role in unpicking them. While the care agency had highlighted a valid issue with the sisters, it was also at fault itself. It also demonstrates how an advocates' opinion can lend weight to people dealing with the authorities – social services had brushed aside the sisters' complaint, but took notice when Nick intervened.