

Safeguarding Adults Week and Predatory Marriage

IT WAS NATIONAL Safeguarding Adults week, November 15-21 and the theme this year was 'Creating Safer Cultures'.

Everyone deserves to be safe.

Safeguarding Adults week, is a time for organisations to come together to raise awareness of important safeguarding issues. The aim is to highlight safeguarding key issues, facilitate conversations and to raise awareness of safeguarding best practice.

So, we can all be better together.

Soroptimists from across the UK, including seven members from our South East England Region, attended a presentation recently on 'Predatory Marriage' by Daphne Franks organised by the SIGBI Safeguarding Forum.

Daphne spoke eloquently about what happened to her late elderly mother, Joan Blass who suffered with dementia and how she wants the law to be changed to prevent it happening to other vulnerable adults.



Daphne's mother, Joan, was 91 with severe dementia and terminal cancer. She died in March 2016. After this, Daphne found out that a much younger man, age 68, had secretly married her five months previously.

Daphne had lived within 30 yards of Joan, and they saw each other every day. Daphne never knew that her mother had married this man. And in UK law, marriage annuls wills. So, Daphne's mother had effectively died without a will, leaving the man to inherit her entire estate.

Predatory marriage is a term that many of us will not have heard of before. It is defined as the practice of marrying an elderly person exclusively for the purpose of gaining access to their estate upon their death. While the requirements for mental capacity to make a valid will are high, in most jurisdictions the requirements for entering into a valid marriage are much lower; even a person suffering dementia may enter into marriage. In many jurisdictions, a marriage arrangement will invalidate any previous will left by the person, resulting in the spouse inheriting the estate.

In the UK, a campaign, Predatory Marriage UK (originally known as Justice for Joan) was started, working to change laws and procedures around marriage to reduce this practice, supported by lawyer Sarah Young of Ridley and Hall. The local MP, Fabian Hamilton, introduced a bill in Parliament during 2018 entitled the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Consent) Bill, to establish that marriage should no longer always revoke a previous will and have introduced other protections against predatory marriage. The bill was passed but ran out of parliamentary time, but work is continuing.

To find out more about Justice for Joan and what action you can take to support them, use this link

<https://www.predatorymarriage.uk/>