

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Adopted son took mother's home and savings



An adopted son is facing jail for abusing his power of attorney over his 90-year old mother's affairs to sell her house and plunder her life savings.

Ian Leonard, 53, a marketing consultant, and his sister, Jennifer Turner, had joint powers over the affairs of Ada Leonard, who had dementia and was admitted to a care home.

Mrs Leonard was found confused in the streets in September 2012 and was placed in a care home Hertfordshire Council as a self-funding patient. Less than a year later, Leonard persuaded his sister that they should sell their mother's Victorian semi-detached house to pay for the care fees and a buy a flat as an investment.

He sold the house for £261,110 and bought a flat for £177,808 in his own name which he rented out. Ms Turner received no money and Leonard refused to pay towards his mother's upkeep, running up £38,000 in care fees.

He began fraudulently spending tens of thousands of pounds of her money, including on a trip to America and a failed pyramid investment scheme.

St Alban's crown court was told that when Houndswood House care home in Radlett said that Mrs Leonard enjoyed her weekly £10 hair appointments, he said that she should have them monthly instead because she would be unable to remember them. He also refused to pay for a new pair of slippers when hers wore out.

Leonard, of Harpenden, was accused of fraud by abusing his power under a lasting power of attorney by selling Mrs Leonard's house in Wheathampstead in May 2013. He was also accused of converting criminal proceeds, using the money to buy his flat in the village in June 2013.

He denied both charges, claiming that both property deals were joint decisions with his sister and he did not act dishonestly. The jury convicted him of both offences. Sentencing was adjourned by Leslie Cuthbert, the recorder, who warned Leonard that custody was almost inevitable. "It was a huge abuse of trust," he said.

Leonard had earlier admitted four other charges totaling £91,786 from September 2012 to August 2015. These included possession of £17,493 rental income from the flat, classed as criminal property, and transferring £29,997 of his mother's money into a failed pyramid scheme. He also spent £1,000 on bar bills, £3,000 on fighting a drink driving charge and an American trip, and transferred £39,197.

In his defence, Leonard, who previously worked as a consultant for further education colleges, claimed that he was in dispute over who should pay the care home fees and that he wanted to prevent his mother's property and money from being "seized".

Mrs Leonard is now living in a different care home. It is understood that the outstanding fees remain unpaid.

**If you would like a free initial consultation to discuss your situation and options open to you then contact me Chris Berry at:**

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