

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the multi-disciplinary work we do to minimise and manage risk to adults who may be vulnerable. It employs a framework which brings together all aspects of an investigation into an allegation of abuse against a vulnerable adult. For any safeguarding issue, we aim to involve the vulnerable person and offer them as much choice as possible.

Safeguarding within the NHS has a multi-agency procedure for responding to suspected abuse of vulnerable adults. This means we have an agreement where organisations work together with the person who we think may be abused, to safeguard that person and take what actions we can. Adult and Community Services co-ordinate the policy, with the Police and the NHS sharing responsibility for ensuring the correct process is used.

Definition of a vulnerable adult

A vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 or over:

- Who is, or may be, in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability
- Who is, or may be, unable to take care of himself/herself, or unable to protect himself/herself against significant harm or exploitation

(Definition from the Department of Health 2002)

Who is a vulnerable adult?

Abuse can affect any vulnerable adult, but particularly someone who is, or may be, unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation, for example:

- Older people
- People with mental health problems
- Disabled people
- People with learning difficulties
- People with acquired brain damage
- People who misuse substances

What is abuse?

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights. It may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It can be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act or omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship

Types of abuse?

- **Physical:** including hitting, shaking, biting, grabbing, withholding food or drink, force-feeding, wrongly administering medicine, unnecessary restraint, failing to provide physical care and aids to living
- **Sexual:** including sexual assault, rape, inappropriate touching/molesting, pressurising someone into sexual acts they don't understand or feel powerless to refuse
- **Emotional or psychological:** including verbal abuse, shouting, swearing, threatening abandonment or harm, isolating, taking away privacy or other rights, bullying/intimidation, blaming, controlling or humiliation

- **Financial or material:** including withholding money or possessions, theft of money or property, fraud, intentionally mismanaging finances, borrowing money and not repaying
- **Neglect:** including withholding food, drink, heating and clothing, failing to provide access to health, social and educational services, ignoring physical care needs, exposing a person to unacceptable risk, or failing to ensure adequate supervision
- **Discriminatory abuse:** including slurs, harassment and maltreatment due to a person's race, gender, disability, age, faith, culture or sexual orientation
- **Institutional abuse:** including the use of systems and routines which neglect a person receiving care. This can happen in any setting where formal care is provided.

What might you notice?

Here are just a few examples of possible signs of abuse, none being conclusive on their own.

- Injuries, such as a slap, being restrained in a chair, or given too much medication
- Being involved in a sexual act that was unwanted or not agreed to, like watching pornography
- Weight loss
- Dehydration
- Lack of personal care
- Bills not being paid
- An overly critical or disrespectful carer who may, for example, bully or undermine
- Sudden loss of assets, friends or family or threats to gain access to someone's money, or to get them to change their will
- Not getting to medical appointments
- Deference or submission to a suspected abuser
- Change in behaviour or mood
- Isolation from usual network of friends, family or community
- Where a carer looks after someone in a way that is convenient to them rather than what the person needs, thereby affecting their health

Tell someone:

If you feel someone is a risk of abuse it is important to tell someone. Here are some useful contacts:

Action on Elder Abuse

Action on Elder Abuse run a free telephone confidential helpline for anyone concerned in any way about the abuse of older people – 0808 808 8141

Police

If you think a crime has been committed call 999, otherwise call your local police station (your telephone directory will have relevant numbers). The police can also offer advice regarding safety at home and in the community and may refer people who have experienced violence, abuse or crimes to the Victim Support helpline – 0845 303 0900.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub details

Tel: 01482 616092 – ask for the adults safeguarding team duty officer

Tel: 01482 247111 – after 5:00pm or during weekends

Fax: 01482 318217 – address to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

Email: adultsafeguarding@hullcc.gcsx.gov.uk (secure)

Care Quality Commission

Information and advice for those concerned about a health or social care service – 03000 616161