

# Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

Advice on how to recognise and alert others to suspected abuse.

All forms of abuse are unacceptable. We all have a responsibility to report all incidents/concerns of suspected abuse.

## Who is a Vulnerable Adult?

A vulnerable adult is any person aged 18 years or over who appears to be eligible for Local Authority or mental health services by reason of mental illness, age or disability and may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves against significant harm or serious exploitation.

Includes vulnerable adults who make arrangements for their own care and/or support. All adults may need help to stop abuse or neglect.

Where the person is not vulnerable you must consider what services or other procedures may apply. Remember if the person is under the age of 18 then Safeguarding Children Procedures will apply.

## What is Abuse?

Any real or high risk of physical or psychological harm, injury or pain.

The mistreatment of a dependent person may be by a formal or informal carer, other vulnerable person or stranger. The abuse may be intentional or unintentional and can take place in any setting.

It will cause the person's human and/or civil right to be ignored or stripped from them by the person(s) who has power over the life of the dependant, for example the unauthorised Deprivation of Liberty.

## Categories of Abuse

**Physical:** *physical assault, rough handling or unreasonable physical restraint eg honour based violence*

**Sexual:** *any non-consenting sexual act or behaviour*

**Psychological:** *verbal and other behaviour that severely affects the well being of an individual*

**Financial:** *misappropriation of funds or other action that is against a person's best interests*

**Neglect:** *so that a person's physical and/or untreated mental well-being is seriously impaired eg pressure sores*

**Discriminatory:** *psychological abuse that is racist, sexist or linked to a person's age or disability*

**Risk of abuse or neglect:** An example could be where a known perpetrator befriends a vulnerable adult

## How to Respond to Suspected Abuse?

### Abuse suspected?

*Assess the situation i.e. are emergency services required?  
Ensure the safety and wellbeing of the individual  
Maintain any forensic evidence.*

### Stage I

*Alert others in own agency following internal procedures.*

### Stage II

*Refer verbally to the Adult Care or Mental Health Services.  
Confirm your report in writing by completing and sending  
the referral form to Adult Care or Mental Health Services.*

## When Abuse is Brought to Your Attention

### Do

- ▶ *Take safeguarding action.*
- ▶ *Remain calm and try not to show any shock or disbelief.*
- ▶ *Listen very carefully to what you are being told.*
- ▶ *Demonstrate a sympathetic approach by acknowledging regret and concern that this has happened to them.*
- ▶ *Assure them that you are required to share the information with your line manager.*
- ▶ *Make a written record of what the person has told you in their words.*
- ▶ *Reassure the person that the service will take steps to support and protect them in the future.*

### Do Not

- ▶ *Stop someone who is freely recalling significant events.*
- ▶ *Ask questions beyond seeking clarification, or press the person for more information (this will be done during any subsequent investigation – doing so now may make essential information inadmissible in court).*
- ▶ *Promise to keep secrets.*
- ▶ *Make promises you are unable to keep.*
- ▶ *Be judgemental.*
- ▶ *Disturb any potential evidence (change or wash a person or clothes etc).*

## Whistle Blowing

*Always act whenever abuse is suspected including when your legitimate concern is not acted upon. Whistle blowers are given protection under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.*

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**For more information**  
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