



Gloucestershire
Safeguarding Adults
Board

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Safeguarding vs. safeguarding

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Safeguarding vs. safeguarding

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The word 'safeguarding' can be interpreted in different ways and this can create some confusion for professionals, when deciding what course of action to take when they have encountered a person who needs support. '*Safeguarding*' can mean two things; a formal safeguarding response under s42 of the Care Act, or a general response to keep someone *safe* and to ensure their needs are met.
- 1.2 These two types of safeguarding are sometimes referred to as *Safeguarding with a capital 'S'* to identify the formal safeguarding response and *safeguarding with a small 's'* to identify the more general response to keep someone safe.

2 What is 'Safeguarding with a capital S'?

- 2.1 A safeguarding enquiry under s42 of the Care Act would be triggered if the Local Authority is made aware that someone with care and support needs has experienced or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result of their care and support needs, they are unable to protect themselves. In the past, this has been described as 'adult protection' and may be referred to as 'formal safeguarding'. If these criteria are met, the local authority will involve partners from other agencies and make (or cause to be made) whatever enquiries are necessary, deciding whether action is necessary and if so what and by whom.

3 What should I do if I think a formal safeguarding response is needed?

- 3.1 You should gain the person's permission if possible and raise a safeguarding concern to **Gloucestershire County Council** using the online portal, available at: <https://adultsocialcareportal.gloucestershire.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/home>
- 3.2 If you cannot gain the person's permission, the local authority may still be able to act if the person is at risk of abuse or neglect. You may want to consult the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board's (GSAB) Multi-agency Policy and Procedure or look on the [GSAB website](#) for further guidance.

4 What is 'safeguarding with a small s'?

- 4.1 Many people with physical or mental health issues who have care and support needs live in complex circumstances and can be very vulnerable. They may need support to keep safe, to manage the risks of day to day life and may need coordinated responses from a variety of health, social care, housing or other professionals. However, they are not necessarily experiencing abuse or neglect so they will need a coordinated response to keep them safe, but not a formal s42 enquiry.

- 4.2 MARM (Multi-Agency Risk Management) is a structured process to support adults with mental capacity who are at risk of serious harm or death, but whose situation does not meet the criteria for a Section 42 Safeguarding Enquiry. It brings together the relevant professionals from health, housing, social care, emergency services, and other agencies to collaboratively assess and manage risk alongside the person they have concerns for. Further information can be found at [Multi-Agency Risk Management \(MARM\) | Safeguarding Adults in Gloucestershire](#)

What should I do if I think someone needs support or a coordinated multi-agency approach, but they are not experiencing abuse or neglect?

- 4.3 If the person needs a social care assessment, seek their permission to request support and then you can ring 01452 426868 and ask to make a referral for a Care Act assessment or find out if they already have an allocated social worker.
- 4.4 If the person has a health or mental health need, seek their permission to contact their doctor in the first instance (or ring 999 if they have an urgent health care need). If you have not sought their permission, you may be asked to go back and speak to them for consent to make a referral. If you already know the professionals who are involved with the person, you could contact them to ask for a meeting to discuss the person's need for a risk assessment or a coordinated response.

5 What should I do if I want to ask the local authority to review a small 's' safeguarding decision?

- 5.1 If you have contacted the local authority with an adult safeguarding concern, but after consideration they have said they are not triggering a formal section 42 enquiry, first ask them for a clear explanation of why this is so that you can understand the reasoning. They will often also offer advice and support with the issue regardless of the safeguarding decision.
- 5.2 If you still have concerns about abuse and harm, you can ask for the decision to be reviewed. Consider what new or more detailed information you can give the local authority to help consider the risks to the person.

Tip: you are helping the local authority in the process of gathering information in order to establish that they (the local authority) has 'reasonable cause to suspect' that abuse is present.

Examples

1. Wandering Risk at Home (small s)

Example: Evelyn, aged 82, who has dementia, has recently begun leaving her flat in the early mornings. Neighbours have guided her home twice. She lives alone, and her support plan isn't currently preventing risks, but there is no evidence of abuse.

Category: safeguarding with a small s

Rationale: This is a care management and risk planning issue, requiring:

Likely outcomes:

Review of support needs

Assistive technology options

GP involvement

Multi-disciplinary planning

2. Organisational Neglect (Capital S)

Example: Marcus, 55, lives in a supported accommodation service. His mobility plan requires staff supervision when he uses the lift. One evening, staff left the unit short-handed and Marcus attempted to use the lift alone. It malfunctioned, and he sustained a significant fall.

Category: Safeguarding with a capital S

Rationale: Harm resulted from a failure to follow safety procedures, so this meets the threshold for a s42 Care Act enquiry.

3. Carer Stress (small s)

Example: Lina, 27, has a progressive neurological condition and requires two carers for transfers. Her partner, Jonah, does a large amount of daily care and feels overwhelmed, telling professionals he worries about "getting it wrong" due to the complexity of equipment and routines.

Category: safeguarding with a small s

Rationale: This is not abuse - it's a need for carer support and a care plan review.

Required actions would include:

Carer's assessment

Care package review

MDT support

4. Unsafe Equipment Use (Capital S)

Example: Rina, 43, needs hoist transfers that must always be done by two trained staff. Despite repeated training, one staff member attempted to transfer her alone to "save time", resulting in Rina falling and sustaining a severe shoulder injury.

Category: Safeguarding with a capital S

Rationale: This is neglect with actual harm due to ignoring clear care instructions.

A s42 enquiry is required.

5. Disagreement about Care Planning / Best Interests (small s)

Example: Harold, 91, has an advanced cognitive impairment and cannot make decisions about where he lives. Professionals believe his increasing falls mean he needs 24-hour care. His adult children want him to remain at home because they feel he would be distressed if he moved.

Category: safeguarding with a small s

Rationale: This is a care-planning / Mental Capacity Act issue, not abuse.

Actions may include:

Capacity assessment
Best interests meeting
Joint care planning

6. Family Blocking Health Access (Capital S)

Example: Noah, 33, lacks capacity for treatment decisions and requires regular epilepsy monitoring. After professionals recommend supported living, his relatives begin refusing access to the community nurse, saying “he doesn’t need strangers in the house”. As a result, Noah’s seizures become more frequent.

Category: Safeguarding with a capital S

Rationale: Blocking necessary healthcare equals neglect, and Noah is experiencing harm.

This meets the threshold for a s42 safeguarding enquiry.

7. Financial Exploitation Concern (small s)

Example: Priya, 48, has recently lost capacity to manage her finances. Her brother wants to continue supporting her at home and becomes defensive when professionals ask about her financial situation. There is no evidence of misuse, but there is disagreement about the best way to manage her care and money.

Category: safeguarding with a small s

Rationale: No harm or abuse is indicated.

This is a best-interests / decision-making issue, not a s42 enquiry.

8. Financial Abuse with Clear Harm (Capital S)

Example: George, 79, relies on his neighbour for shopping. The neighbour has started using George’s bank card without permission, withdrawing large sums. George is now unable to afford heating and food.

Category: Safeguarding with a capital S

Rationale: This is financial abuse causing harm, requiring a s42 enquiry.

Further Guidance/Useful Links

[Multi Agency Safeguarding Policy and Procedures | Safeguarding Adults in Gloucestershire](#)

[Understanding what constitutes a safeguarding concern](#)

[adult-safeguarding-decision-making-support-tool.pdf](#)

Gloucestershire Health and Care NHSFT Mental Health Crisis Team (Mental Health Advice and Support) [Help in a Crisis > Glos Health & Care NHS Foundation Trust](#)

Guidance originally produced by Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board and consent kindly provided to allow it to be used by GSAB.