

Information for a person alleged to have caused harm, abuse or neglect

“**Adult safeguarding**” is working with adults with care and support needs to keep them safe from abuse or neglect. It is an important part of what many public services do, and a key responsibility of local authorities.

Safeguarding is aimed at people with care and support needs who may be in vulnerable circumstances and at risk of abuse or neglect. In these cases, local services must work together to spot those at risk and take steps to protect them.

Abuse is when someone does or says something which harms you and makes you upset and scared. It is always unacceptable; everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Abuse can be a single one off act or something that happens over weeks, months or years.

Abuse can happen in lots of different ways. Abuse and neglect can be defined in many ways and there can be no exhaustive list, however the most recent guidance from the government identifies the following types of abuse and neglect:

Physical abuse – including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.

Domestic abuse – including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called ‘honour’ based violence.

Sexual abuse – including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological abuse – including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Financial or material abuse – including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult’s financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Modern slavery – encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

Discriminatory abuse – including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

Organisational abuse – including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Neglect and acts of omission – including ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Self-neglect – this covers a wide range of behaviour; neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

What happens when a safeguarding concern is received?

The Council takes every safeguarding concern seriously and will work with the police, health services, voluntary organisations and anyone else who can help to make adults with care and support needs safe.

What happens first?

When we receive a safeguarding concern we will make an immediate decision:

- Is the adult in immediate danger?
- What immediate action is required to safeguard the adult and maybe others?
- Is action needed in the persons 'Best Interest'?
- Is a meeting necessary with other professionals to share information and decide how to proceed?

What are Safeguarding meetings?

We may hold one or more safeguarding meetings. The first safeguarding meeting will decide if an enquiry is needed.

What happens if an enquiry is needed?

The most appropriate person to carry out the enquiry will be asked to do it. This might be Gloucestershire Council, the police, health staff or the care provider.

The purpose of the enquiry is to:

- establish facts;
- ascertain the adult's views and wishes;

- assess the needs of the adult for protection, support and redress and how they might be met;
- protect from the abuse and neglect, in accordance with the wishes of the adult;
- make decisions as to what follow-up action should be taken with regard to the person or organisation responsible for the abuse or neglect; and
- enable the adult to achieve resolution and recovery.

The enquiry may involve a wide range of activities depending on the circumstances. It will include interviewing people who have witnessed or been involved in the incident. It might also involve reviewing records or policies and procedures.

Sometimes other investigations will also be needed under other procedures. For example, if a criminal offence is suspected the police may undertake an investigation, and if so, this will take priority. If the person is an employee, then a disciplinary process may be required. There may also be a need for an internal incident investigation.

A safeguarding enquiry is separate from these, but often it is possible for organisations to work together so that people do not need to be interviewed more than once.

Fairness

Care will be taken to make sure the safeguarding enquiry is conducted in a way that is fair to all concerned.

The following principles apply:

- enquiries will be carried out impartially
- enquiries will be undertaken with an open mind as to what has or has not happened
- enquiries will base its findings on the established facts
- if concerns have been raised about your actions then you will have a chance to respond to these allegations
- you will have an opportunity to respond to the findings of the investigation

If you are being interviewed you can have someone sit in with you for support. If you have particular communication needs these will be provided for. If you feel that the enquiry is not being undertaken fairly you can raise your concerns with

What happens at the end of an enquiry?

When the enquiry is finished in most cases we will organise a final safeguarding meeting.

At this meeting we will discuss what has happened and what needs to happen next. Your views on the allegation and the investigation's findings will be included in this decision. You will be informed of decisions made.

We record all our actions on our computer system.

Throughout the safeguarding investigation, decisions will need to be made as to whether any actions are needed to keep the adult at risk or other people safe. These decisions will need to be reviewed once the investigation is completed.

How long will the process take?

Some Safeguarding Adults enquiries can be completed quite quickly, but others can be very lengthy and complex. You will be kept informed as the enquiry progresses.

If you have any questions the contact person for this safeguarding concern is

Their/my contact details are:

Phone

Email

They/I can be contacted at these times

Additional Information

Issues for employees and volunteers

If an allegation has been made about you in the course of your work then your organisation will need to provide you with support. This should include:

- supporting you to understand the procedures being followed
- being available to respond to your questions
- keeping you updated as appropriate

As well as support from your manager, you may also choose to seek support from family and friends or depending on your circumstances, a union representative, professional body/support network.

If you want to seek advice on your employment rights, you may wish to contact organisations such as the Payment and Employment Rights Service (PERS) or Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). If you are a volunteer, you may wish to contact organisations such as the NCVO National Council for Voluntary Organisation for advice or information.

If there is a need to make changes to your working arrangements whilst an allegation is investigated or subsequently, your manager will speak to you about this.

If your organisation is not aware of a safeguarding adults concern or enquiry concerning your actions at work or in your private life and you work with adults at risk, you should inform them as soon as possible.

Information for relatives/informal carers alleged to have caused harm

Where an incident has occurred unintentionally, for example, due to the extent of care demands on you, or your own needs as a carer, or your understanding of the person's care needs, it may be necessary to review the care and support needs of the adult at risk and your needs as a carer.

Decisions about who your relative/friend has contact with or receives support from, should be made by them. If the person lacks mental capacity about these particular decisions, then a decision will be required in their 'best interests' in line with the Mental Capacity Act.

You may choose to seek support from family and friends or depending on your circumstances, an advocate, carer support group/network or someone else. In Solihull the Carers Centre may be able to offer support.

Information for other 'adults at risk' alleged to have caused harm

The purpose of the safeguarding adult procedures is to keep people safe.

If your actions have caused someone else to be harmed, then it will be necessary to find ways to keep them safe in the future.

There may need to be a decision about whether you have contact with them in the future, and if so, how often or how this is managed.

If the incident has occurred because you need more support or a different kind of support, then your needs and services will also be reviewed. This will be discussed with you. If you lack the mental capacity to make these decisions yourself, then a decision about your support needs will be made in your 'best interests' in line with the Mental Capacity Act, taking your views and wishes into account.

You may choose to seek support from family and friends, or depending on your circumstances, your social worker, an advocate, carer, support group/network or someone else.

Further Information

Gloucestershire Safeguarding Policy and Procedures