

The safeguarding process/What happens after a safeguarding concern is received.

If you have experienced any form of abuse Gloucestershire Council will work with the police, health services, voluntary organisations and anyone else who can help to make and keep you safe. We will work together and share information to try and protect you from further abuse.

This leaflet will tell you what we do, when we do it and how we do it. Our aim is to involve you at every stage and to support you to make informed decisions.

What happens first?

When we receive a safeguarding concern we will make an immediate decision – are you in immediate danger? If we think you are, we will take immediate action to safeguard you with your agreement.

If we think you are in immediate danger and we think you do not have capacity to understand the situation we will take action that we consider to be in your 'Best Interest' and which is the least restrictive option to safeguard you.

If we think you are NOT in immediate danger we will talk to you or meet with other professionals to decide how to proceed.

Someone will be identified to keep you informed of what we are doing and why. This is likely to be your social worker.

What is capacity?

Capacity is the ability to make a decision in relation to a specific matter. The law requires us to:

- Assume a person has capacity unless it is established that they lack capacity
- Not treat a person as if they are unable to make a decision unless all practical steps to help them do so have been taken without success
- Not treat a person as unable to make a decision merely because the decision made is considered unwise by someone else.
- Ensure anything done for or on behalf of a person who lacks capacity is done in their 'best interests'
- Make certain anything done for, or on behalf of, people without capacity should be the least restrictive of their basic rights and freedom.

Sometimes people can make some decisions but can also be unable to make other decisions. For example: a person may be able to choose what to wear or eat and drink but may not be able to decide how to protect themselves from harm.

If a person cannot do one of the following they will be assessed as lacking mental capacity for a particular decision:

- Understand the information relevant to the decision
- Retain the information long enough to make the decision
- Use or weigh the information as part of the process of making the decision
- Communicate their decision (whether by talking, using sign language or any other means).

What are Safeguarding meetings?

We may hold one or more safeguarding meetings. You will always be invited to safeguarding meetings about you and you can bring someone with you to support you. If you do not want to attend or cannot attend, someone can go on your behalf to represent your views – such as an advocate; or we will talk to you before the meeting so your views can be heard. We will always tell you afterwards what was discussed and what will happen next.

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.

A person will be identified lead the enquiry and they will always talk to you wherever we can. They can arrange for you to be supported by an advocate. An advocate will listen to you, provide information and explain options to you, assist you to reach your own decisions and support or represent you in expressing your views. The independent advocate should always support your views whether or not they agree with those views.

They may also talk to anyone else who can help with the enquiry so we can find out what happened. This may be members of your family or employed staff.

We may also want to see care records.

What happens at the end of an enquiry?

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

You will always be invited to safeguarding meetings about you and you can bring someone with you to support you. If you do not want to attend or cannot attend, someone can go on your behalf to represent your views – such as an advocate; or we will talk to you before the meeting so your views can be heard. We will always tell you afterwards what was discussed and what will happen next.

At this meeting we will discuss what has happened and what needs to happen next. If we think you are safe we will take no more action and the case will be closed as a safeguarding issue. If you are still at risk of abuse we will talk about what can be done to prevent the abuse. We do this by putting a Safeguarding Plan in place.

We record all our actions on our computer system.

What might happen to the person who is causing you harm?

If this person is important to you, we will, if possible, try to help keep your relationship with them. We can offer services, advice and information to support you.

If you don't want to see them anymore, we can help make this possible. If the person is an employed staff member they will not be allowed to contact you whilst the investigation takes place. The person who is abusing you may be arrested by the police who might prosecute them.

What is a Safeguarding Plan?

If we consider you are still at risk of abuse we will put a safeguarding plan in place. This plan will identify what can be done to prevent the abuse or reduce the possibility for further abuse.

We will identify someone to make sure the plan is put into action. We will review the plan on a regular basis with you and any other people involved in the safeguarding plan.

What happens afterwards?

After all the above has happened we will ask you if you are satisfied with the end result of what people did to try and keep you safe, how satisfied you are with how people dealt with your concern throughout and do you feel safer now because of the help from people dealing with your concern?

We hope you will be able to tell us what your experience was, so we can review our procedures and make improvements if necessary.

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 or concerns, at any time, please talk to your social worker who will be identified as your link worker.