

What is Safeguarding? What is abuse?

Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action.

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. No-one has the right to abuse you.

Abuse can be a single one off act or something that happens over weeks, months or years. It can be accidental or deliberate. Just because there is no injury does not mean there is no abuse.

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.

Who abuses?

Most people will not abuse BUT anyone could abuse. It might be someone you know or a stranger. It can be anyone who uses their “power” over you.

Anyone can carry out abuse or neglect, including:

- A partner, spouse, child or relative
- A friend or neighbour
- A health or social care worker
- Staff in a residential or nursing home or hospital
- A volunteer worker
- Someone else you live with – another service user
- A stranger

A lot of attention is often given to targeted fraud or internet scams perpetrated by complete strangers, but it is far more likely that the person responsible for abuse is known to the adult and is in a position of trust and power.

Where can abuse happen?

Abuse or neglect can happen anywhere and at anytime, but the most common places are:

- In a person's own home, including by those who you are living with, or perhaps by relatives or people who visit you in your home.
- In hospital or
- In a residential or nursing care home, where you may live permanently or for short periods. You could be abused by the people who work there or visit or people who are also living or using the services.
- At a day centre or social club. You could be abused by the people who work there or visit or people who are also using the centre or club.