

Information on Adult Safeguarding for relatives, friends and carers

“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.

‘Carers’, relatives and friends are frequently helpful in supporting an adult with care and support needs to participate in the adult safeguarding process when dealing with difficult and distressing issues.

What happens when a safeguarding concern is received?

The Council will work with the police, health services, voluntary organisations and anyone else who can help to make your relatives or friend safe. We will aim is to involve your relative/friend at every stage and support them to make informed decisions

We will always try to involve ‘carers’, relatives and friends but will only do so with the adults consent. If an adult decides that they do not wish their ‘carers’, relative or friends to be informed or involved then all those involved in the safeguarding arrangements will respect that decision. If the adult does not have mental capacity to decide this for themselves, a decision will be made in their ‘best interest’ in line with the Mental Capacity Act.

What happens first?

When we receive a safeguarding concern we will make an immediate decision – is your relative/friend in immediate danger? If we think they are, we will take immediate action to safeguard them, with their agreement.

If we think your relative/friend is in immediate danger and we think they do not have capacity to understand the situation we will take action that we consider to be in their ‘Best Interest’ and which is the least restrictive option to safeguard them.

If we think your relative/friend is NOT in immediate danger we will talk to them and we will talk to or meet with other professionals to decide how to proceed.

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

What is capacity?

Capacity is the ability to make decisions. 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 they make an unwise decision
- 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. Your relative/friend will always be invited to their safeguarding meetings and they can choose to bring someone with them to support them. If they do not want to attend or cannot attend, someone can go on their behalf to represent their views – sometimes that can be a relative, friend or an advocate; or we will talk to them before the meeting so their views can be heard. We will always tell your relative/friend afterwards what was discussed and what will happen next.

A decision will be made at the meeting about what information will be shared with 'carers', relatives or friends. The level of information shared will be determined by the adult and our legal obligations are to maintain confidentiality.

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 to lead the enquiry and they will always talk to your relative/friend wherever we can. They may arrange for your relative/friend to be supported by an advocate. An advocate will listen, provide information and explain options, assist your relative/friend to reach their own decisions and support or represent them in expressing their views. The independent advocate will always support an individual whether or not they agree with their views.

A person identified to lead the enquiry may also talk to anyone else who can help with the enquiry so we can find out what happened. This may be you, other members of the 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.

Your relative/friend will always be invited to their safeguarding meetings and as detailed earlier they can bring someone with them to provide support. If they do not want to attend or cannot attend, someone can go on their behalf to represent their views; or we will talk to them before the meeting so their views can be heard. We will always tell them 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 your relative/friend is safe we will take no more action and the case will be closed as a safeguarding issue. If your relative/friend is 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 is your role in the safeguarding procedure?

Relatives or friends may have a range of roles depending on the circumstances and the wishes of the adult with care and support needs.

Relatives and friends have a role in:

- Supporting the adult to tell us what their wishes are and to make sure they are heard, or speak on their behalf in their best interest if they do not have mental capacity;
- Supporting them through difficult meetings and interviews about distressing experiences;

- Sharing information and knowledge about the risks your relative/friend is experiencing and their support needs;
- Supporting an assessment of needs, sometimes this may include your needs as a carer;
- Contributing to the Safeguarding Plan to prevent the abuse or reduce the possibility for further abuse.

How long will the process take?

Some Safeguarding Adults enquiries can be completed quite quickly, but others can be very lengthy and complex. Your relative/friend 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

Other useful partners:

Carers Gloucestershire

Cheltenham Community Projects (Advocacy)

Age UK Gloucestershire