

# What is safeguarding adults?

Patient information leaflet





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This leaflet is about protecting your rights and stopping abuse. It is for adults who are aged 18 and over.

**Abuse can happen anywhere.**

**At any time and be caused by anyone.**

**Always remember abuse is always wrong.**

## **Who might be at risk of abuse?**

An adult at risk is anyone aged 18 or over who, because of illness, disability, age, or dependence (whether emotional, financial or other) is unable to take care of themselves, or to be cared for adequately by others. An adult at risk may be unable to protect themselves from abuse or exploitation.

You may be at more risk if you are:

- older and frail
- have learning difficulties
- have mental health problems
- are dependent on alcohol and substances
- have language barriers

## **What is abuse?**

- Abuse is what happens if someone does or says something to you which may make you feel scared or upset.
- Abuse is when someone tries to take your rights away.
- Abuse is if someone does something to you even if you tell them to stop.

You may feel too scared to ask an abuser to stop; you may feel that no-one will believe you. Any abuse is wrong.

## Different kinds of abuse

- **Physical abuse** - Hitting, pushing, kicking, shaking, burning, too much or not enough medication.
- **Emotional abuse** - Threats, name-calling, ignoring you, shouting at you, not involving you in decision making about you, isolating you from friends, family and services.
- **Sexual abuse** - Touching you when you do not want to be touched, unwanted sexual intercourse or any sexual activity that you do not or cannot give your consent to, being made to watch sexually explicit films.
- **Sexual exploitation** - Involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where a victim receives 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.
- **Modern Slavery** - Includes human trafficking and forced labour.
- **Financial or material abuse** - Stealing your money or possessions, using your money to buy things for themselves, telling you that you do not have a choice in how you spend your money.
- **Neglect** - Not giving medication, or giving you too much, not allowing you to visit the doctor. Not allowing you to have the heating on if you are cold, not giving you clean clothes or food or drinks when you are hungry or thirsty.
- **Self Neglect** - Is when an adult declines essential support with their care and support needs, and this is having a substantial impact on their overall wellbeing.

- **Discrimination** - You are treated differently or unfairly because of the colour of your skin, religious beliefs or practices, gender, age, disability, sexual preferences or because of language barriers.
- **Institutional** - This may occur if you are a resident in a care home, a patient in a hospital or if you attend a day centre. It could mean that you are not being treated with dignity and respect.
- **Domestic violence** - This is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults aged 18 or over, who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. It may include psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional or cultural violence.

## Who might abuse me?

Anyone can be an abuser. It could be:

- A partner or a member of your family, a friend or neighbour
- A member of staff or carer
- Another adult at risk
- A stranger
- It could be more than one person

It is important to point out that most people will not want to abuse you, and that most people will want to support you.

### **Abuse can be:**

- Something that happens once
- Something that happens repeatedly
- A deliberate act
- Something that was unintentional, perhaps due to a lack of understanding
- A crime

## Where does abuse happen?

Unfortunately, abuse can happen anywhere, and at any time. It could take place:

- In your home
- In hospital, at a day centre, residential home or college
- At a friend's, family member's or partner's house
- On public transport
- At a place where you socialise
- In any street or public place

## **What are my rights?**

Abuse is never okay. If you are being abused it is not your fault, and you do not deserve it.

- You have the right to live your life free of abuse and to be treated with dignity and respect.
- You have the right to make choices about your life, and to be involved in decision making about things that affect you.
- These rights are yours, whether you live at home, in a care home, or in a hospital.
- You have a right to be listened to and to be supported if you feel you are experiencing abuse or that you are at risk of abuse.

## **What can I do if I am worried that I am being abused or if I think I am at risk of being abused?**

We understand that it is difficult to know what to do in this situation, but our advice will always be to tell someone you trust and tell them as soon as you can.

You could tell a friend, a family member, your partner, a nurse or key worker, a doctor. You could also contact official authorities like Social Services or the police.

## **What will happen if I choose to tell you that I am being abused?**

We will:

- listen carefully, support you and take any information you give us seriously.
- record your worries and concerns, using the words that you said.
- inform the official authority on your behalf or help you to make the initial contact.
- take every step possible to ensure you are safe and free of harm.



We can not keep any information secret that a person is being, or is at risk of being abused.

## **What will the official authorities (Social Services, Police) do?**

- They will listen to your concerns and record them.
- They will take every step to ensure that you are safe and that you are not being treated differently because you have reported that you are being abused.
- They may meet with professionals involved in your care, and identify a plan to keep you safe. You would be invited to attend that meeting, with an advocate or a trusted friend. If you are not able to attend, a member of staff will be identified to meet with you and explain what happened at the meeting.
- They will not tolerate abuse.
- They may prosecute the alleged abuser, or try to get that person support.

## Important contact numbers

If you or someone you know is being abused or is at risk of abuse, it is important that you tell someone immediately.

- **In an emergency ring 999**
- **Contact a member of Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust staff. This could be your:**  
Care Co-ordinator, Named Nurse, Consultant Psychiatrist, Psychologist, Occupational Therapist or anyone that you trust.
- **Local authority** (pick the number for the local authority in your area):  
Allerdale – 0300 303 3589  
Carlisle – 0300 303 3249  
Copeland – 0300 303 3589  
Eden – 0300 303 3249  
Newcastle – 0191 278 8377  
Gateshead – 0191 433 7033  
North Tyneside – 0191 643 2777  
South Tyneside – 0191 424 6000  
Northumberland – 01670 536 400  
Sunderland – 0191 520 5552
- **Police Non Emergency Number** - Tel: 101
- **Protecting Adults at Risk Unit** - Tel: 101
- **Victims Information Service** - Tel: 0808 168 9293

## National organisations

- **Elder Abuse Response Helpline** - Tel: 0808 808 8141
- **Respond – for people with learning disabilities**  
Tel: 0207 383 0700
- **Equality Advisory Support Service**  
Tel: 0808 800 0082; Textphone: 0808 800 0084

## References

- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy – Vo4 – Jan 17 CNTW(C)24
- Abuse - Information for adults physically, emotionally or sexually abused as children. Dr Lesley Maunder and Lorna Cameron, 2011

Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre. If you would like to tell us what you think about this leaflet please get in touch.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (eg Braille, audio, larger print, easy read, BSL, or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre  
Tel: 0191 246 7288

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