

Safeguarding Adults

Protecting adults from abuse

This leaflet is about adult abuse and what you can do if you are concerned that someone may be at risk of harm. We call someone an 'adult at risk', that is, at risk of harm by others, if they are especially vulnerable because of, for example, age, illness or disability.

Who is 'an adult at risk'?

An 'adult at risk', formerly called a 'vulnerable adult' is someone aged 18 or over who is, or may be:

- in need of health or social-care services, and
- unable to protect themselves from harm; or
- someone caring for another person who may be 'at risk'.

If you think that someone is being abused, you can contact Social Care Direct, who will contact the appropriate local Adult Social Care team. Their contact details are at the end of this information sheet.

The 'Sussex Multi-Agency Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Adults at Risk' is about protecting vulnerable people from harm or abuse. You can see it on the East Sussex County Council website at www.eastsussex.gov.uk.

What is 'Safeguarding adults'?

'Safeguarding adults' is the name given to the national standards which we have to follow to protect people from abuse.

These standards were agreed by the Association of Directors of Social Services, the Department of Health, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (now the Care Quality Commission) and the Association of Chief Police Officers.

What do we mean by abuse?

Abuse is an action by another person which goes against someone's human or civil rights.

This may be a single act or something that happens repeatedly over time. The abuse may be quite deliberate or it may be the result of poor care or ignorance. An adult at risk may be neglected, persuaded to agree to something against their will or taken advantage of because they do not fully understand the consequences of their choices or actions.

Abuse can take many forms. It may be physical, mental, emotional, sexual or financial. Examples of abuse are:

- hitting, slapping, pushing or rough handling;
- giving medication incorrectly;
- depriving someone of food, clothing or warmth;
- preventing someone from getting appropriate health care;

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- any kind of sexual activity where an adult at risk has not given consent or is unable to give consent;
- misuse or theft of money, possessions or property;
- pressurising someone in connection with wills or property;
- shouting, threatening to punish, swearing or using degrading language;
- neglecting someone's medical or physical needs, either deliberately or by failing to understand what their needs are; and
- discrimination or harassment for any reason.

An abuser could be anyone but it is usually someone the person knows. Abuse can happen anywhere. It may happen at home, in a residential or nursing home, hospital, day centre or in a public place. Some kinds of abuse are also a criminal offence.

What should I do if someone tells me that they are being abused or if they are frightened that they may be abused?

- Stay calm and listen to them.
- Take seriously what you are being told.
- Remember that medical evidence might be needed.
- Offer the person support to help them to stop the abuse happening.
- Make a written note of what you have been told.
- Contact us on 0345 60 80 191, or the police.

What not to do

- Don't keep asking the person for more details.
- Don't assume that someone else is aware of the situation and will take action.
- Don't contact the alleged abuser.
- Don't promise to keep the information secret.
- Don't be afraid to contact us or the police to discuss what you have been told.

What should I do if I suspect abuse or if I have witnessed someone being abused?

You should contact us and we will pass on your concerns. If you need to discuss your concerns outside normal office hours, you can contact the Emergency Duty Service on 01323

If you think that the person may be at immediate risk of harm, you should contact the police by calling **999**.

What will happen if I report my concerns to you or the police?

We will consider your concerns as a matter of urgency and decide together what action to take, taking account of the wishes of the person at risk.

All the organisations involved (which could be the police, health professionals, Adult Social Care or a voluntary organisation) will consider what they will do to prevent the abuse happening again and investigate the situation to see what caused it.

They will always consider the welfare of the person concerned, whose views and wishes will always be central to any action taken.

Who do I contact?

If you live in East Sussex you can contact us at Social Care Direct:

- Phone: 0345 60 80 191
- Minicom: 01323 4666 30
- Fax: 01323 466567
- E-mail: socialcaredirect@eastsussex.gov.uk
- You can contact us by text message from your mobile phone. Send your text to 07797 878111.
- These calls are charged at a local rate.

Out-of-hours Emergency Duty Service

Phone: 01323 636399

Sussex Police

Phone: 0845 60 70 999

Care Quality Commission

Phone: 03000 616161

E-mail: enquiries@cqc.org.uk

CQC National Correspondence

PO Box 1258

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE99 5AU

Action on Elder Abuse Helpline

Freephone: 0808 808 8141

Getting more copies of this leaflet

If you would like this information in large print, in Braille, on audio tape, on CD or in another language, please ask Social Care Direct. Phone 0345 60 80 191 or use any of the other contact methods shown above.