

ADULT ABUSE



Who is this guidance for?

This is a public information leaflet to:

- help you recognise signs of possible abuse of vulnerable adults; and
- make you aware of what you can do and who you can contact if you think someone is being or has been abused.

Who is a vulnerable adult?

A vulnerable adult is anyone aged 18 or over who cannot take care of themselves. Vulnerable adults may not be able to protect themselves against significant harm or unfair treatment. This may be because they have a mental health problem, a disability, visual or hearing problems, are old and frail, or are ill.

Because of this, these adults may receive a care service in their own home or in the community. They may live in a residential care home, nursing home or a similar setting.

Why do we need to protect vulnerable adults?

Vulnerable adults have the right to have their civil and human rights upheld and to live a life free from abuse. Everyone should

treat vulnerable people with respect and dignity. They should be able to choose how to live their lives independently, and receive support in doing this.

Vulnerable adults should get the opportunity to take part in their local community as active citizens. They should also be able to fulfil their personal hopes and ambitions and do as well as they can in all aspects of their daily lives. This includes being able to get support services and someone to speak for them, and having their voice heard in decisions that affect their lives.

Vulnerable adults that are victims of abuse need to be confident the law will protect them. They also need to know that they will have their civil and human rights upheld during any investigation that takes place.

What is Adult Abuse?

Abuse is a violation of a person's human and civil rights by any other person. Abuse can take many forms.

What forms does abuse take?

Physical Abuse

Including:

- hitting • slapping • pushing • kicking • burning
- giving a person medicine that may harm them • restraining
- disciplining a person in an inappropriate way.

Possible Signs:

- fractures • bruising • burns • pain • marks
- not wanting to be touched.

Psychological Abuse

Including:

- emotional abuse • verbal abuse • humiliation • bullying
- the use of threats.

Possible Signs:

- being withdrawn • too eager to do everything they are asked
- showing compulsive behaviour • not being able to do things they used to • not being able to concentrate or focus.

Financial or Material Abuse

Including:

- stealing from the person • cheating them • using them for financial gain • putting pressure on them about wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions • misusing or stealing their property, possessions or benefits.

Possible Signs:

- having unusual difficulty with finances • not having enough money • being too protective of money and things they own • not paying bills • not having normal home comforts.

Sexual Abuse

Including:

- direct or indirect sexual activity where the vulnerable adult cannot or does not agree to it.

Possible Signs:

- physical symptoms include genital itching or soreness or having a sexually transmitted disease • using bad language
- not wanting to be touched • behaving in a sexually inappropriate way • changes in appearance.

Neglect or Acts of Omission

Including:

- withdrawing or not giving the help that a vulnerable adult needs, so causing them to suffer.

Possible Signs:

- having pain or discomfort • being very hungry, thirsty or untidy • failing health • changes in behaviour.

Discriminatory Abuse

Including:

- abusing a person because of their ethnic origin, religion, language, age, sexuality, gender or disability.

Possible Signs:

- the person is not receiving the care services they require
- their carer is overly critical or makes insulting remarks about the person • the person is made to dress differently from how they wish.

Institutional Abuse

Including:

- abuse or mistreatment by an organisation or by any individual within a building where the person is living or receiving care.

Possible Signs:

- the person has no personal clothing or possessions
- there is no care plan for them • he or she is often admitted to hospital • there are instances of professionals having treated them badly or unsatisfactorily or acting in a way that causes harm to the person.

This is only a guide and you should not consider it a complete list of forms and signs of abuse.

It is important that all of us are aware of these warning signs. Please be aware that a vulnerable adult could be a friend of your family, your neighbour or even a relative.

Who might the abuser be?

It could be anyone:

- a partner, child, relative or friend;
- a paid or volunteer carer;
- a health, social care or other worker;
- a person who claims to be an employer of one of the above; or
- a stranger.

How might you become aware of abuse?

- You may see or hear something happen.
- A vulnerable adult may tell you about apparent abuse.
- A friend, family member or somebody else may tell you something that causes you concern.
- You may notice injuries or physical signs that cause you concern.
- You may notice either the victim or abuser behaving in a way that alerts you that something may be wrong.

Who do you contact if you suspect abuse?

If you ever feel in immediate danger or think someone else may be in immediate danger, dial 999.

If you suspect abuse it is important that you report your concerns to social services or the police.

When contacting social services please ring your local social services office and ask to speak to the duty officer. They will answer your questions and explain how your concern will be dealt with.

You will find contact numbers for the Health and Social Care Trusts, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and other sources of advice below.

If you are calling an 'out of hours' number please ask for the 'social services contact on call'.

It may also be possible to take civil action. This means using the law to deal with the matter. If you prefer to do this, you should get advice from a solicitor.

ADULT ABUSE

Health and Social Care Trust numbers

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Normal working hours (9am to 5pm) – 028 2563 5558
Out of hours (5pm to 9am) – 028 9446 8833

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Normal working hours (9am to 5pm) – 028 9266 5181 extension 4544
Out of hours (5pm to 9am) – 028 9056 5444

Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Normal working hours (9am to 5pm) – 028 3083 2650
Out of hours (5pm to 9am) – 028 3083 5000

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Normal working hours (9am to 5pm) – 028 9056 5707
Out of hours (5pm to 9am) – 028 9056 5444

Western Health and Social Care Trust

Normal working hours (9am to 5pm) – 028 7131 4090
Out of hours (5pm to 9am) – 028 7134 5171

Police Service of Northern Ireland numbers

Emergency 999
Non-emergency and general enquiries 0845 600 8000

Helpline numbers

24-hour Domestic Violence helpline – 0800 917 1414
Action on Elder Abuse helpline – 0808 808 8141

Other sources of advice

The Older People's Advocate - 028 9031 6383

REMEMBER: We are all responsible for protecting vulnerable adults.

SEE THE SIGNS, BREAK THE SILENCE!

This leaflet is available in other formats and languages on request.

This leaflet is available to download at:
www.nidirect.gov.uk/adultawpublic.pdf and
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/adultawpublic.pdf

ADULT ABUSE

IT GROWS IN SILENCE

Recognising Adult Abuse and what to do about it!



Northern
Ireland
Office



Department of
Health, Social Services
and Public Safety

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

AN ROINN
Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí

MINISTRE O
Poustie, Resydenter Heisin
an Fowk Siccar