

The ROYAL MARSDEN

NHS Foundation Trust

Safeguarding adults at risk of harm or abuse

A patient and carers guide to identifying and
reporting concerns about abuse or neglect

Patient Information



NHS

What does safeguarding mean?

Safeguarding adults means protecting those at risk of harm from suffering abuse or neglect from others. Abuse can happen anywhere; at home, in a residential or nursing home, in a hospital, at work or in the street. Once a safeguarding concern is raised, the local authority will take the lead in investigating and putting things in place to prevent further harm.

There are different types of abuse, which include:

- **Physical** – being hurt or harmed either deliberately or through rough, careless or thoughtless behaviour
- **Emotional or psychological** – being humiliated, put down or made to feel anxious or frightened; this includes cyber bullying
- **Financial abuse or theft** – someone using your money or possessions in a way that you do not want
- **Neglect** – not being given the things you need to feel safe and comfortable or not making sure you get the care or treatment you need
- **Self neglect** – neglecting to care for your own personal hygiene, health or surroundings, such as the home
- **Domestic abuse** – including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse and so-called ‘honour’ based violence by an intimate partner or family member. The ultimate goal is control
- **Sexual abuse** – being made to do something that you do not want to do or being exposed to sexual activity/abuse
- **Modern slavery** – encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude
- **Discriminatory abuse** – unequal treatment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation and maternity

- **Organisational abuse** – including neglect and poor care practice within a care setting such as hospital, care home or care provided in a person’s own home.

Anyone can be vulnerable to abuse at some time in their life. The person who is responsible for the abuse is often well known to the adult at risk. They could be:

- a paid carer or volunteer
- a health worker, social care or other worker
- a relative, friend or neighbour
- another resident or service user
- an occasional visitor or someone who is providing a service
- someone who deliberately exploits vulnerable people.

Who is at risk?

Those who need safeguarding help are often elderly and frail, living on their own at home, those with physical or learning disabilities, people with mental health needs or those reliant on others for care and support.

How can I spot adult abuse?

At first, you might not recognise the signs of abuse. Some signs are listed below:

Physical abuse

- Unexplained signs of injury such as bruises, burns or scars, or more serious unexplained injuries such as broken bones
- Signs of being restrained, such as bruises on the wrists
- Report of a person taking too much of their medicines or not taking their medicines regularly
- Staff in a care home refusing to allow you to see the elderly person alone.

Emotional abuse

- Threatening, belittling, or controlling behaviour by the abuser
- Behaviour from the abused person suggesting they are distressed and anxious in the presence of certain people.

Financial abuse

- Significant withdrawals from the vulnerable person's bank account
- Items or cash missing
- Suspicious changes in wills, power of attorney or other documents
- Unnecessary services, goods or subscriptions.

Neglect

- Not having access to food or fluid and experiencing unusual weight loss or dehydration
- Being left dirty or unbathed
- Untreated physical problems, such as bedsores/pressure sores.

Self neglect

- People who do not look after their personal care needs
- Unsafe living conditions (no heating or running water, faulty electrical wiring, other fire hazards).

For people who self-neglect, local authorities may accept a safeguarding referral or apply a similar process.

Domestic abuse

- Physical injuries or bruises
- Heavy make up to cover injuries
- Fearful, meek, anxious and apologetic behaviour
- Seeming withdrawn and reluctant to engage with others
- Little access to money.

Sexual abuse

- Bruises around the breasts or genitals
- Unexplained genital infections
- Unexplained bleeding
- Torn, stained or bloody underwear.

Modern slavery

- Scruffy appearance or poor personal hygiene
- Lack of possessions or money
- Reluctance to interact with other people
- Unaware of their address, seeming to be under the control of someone else.

Discriminatory abuse

- Seeming withdrawn and isolated
- Fearful and anxious behaviour
- Being refused access to services or being excluded inappropriately.

Organisational abuse

- Inadequate staffing levels
- Poor standards of care
- A lack of flexibility from care staff.

What should I do if I am being abused or I have concerns that someone is being abused?

If you think the person is at immediate risk of serious harm from physical violence or you are worried that there is an immediate danger of harm then you should contact the police by dialling 999.

If there is no immediate risk, you should talk to a professional or someone you trust who can discuss your concerns with you.

This may be a:

- hospital staff member
- GP
- social worker or care manager
- care worker
- community or district nurse
- daycare worker.

Reporting abuse if the adult at risk is a patient of The Royal Marsden

If the patient attends The Royal Marsden, then speak to your Clinical Nurse Specialist or ward staff. You can also report your concerns directly to the local authority safeguarding adult team where the person lives such as:

Sutton Adult Social Care	020 8770 5000
London Borough of Croydon	020 8726 6500
Surrey County Council	0300 470 9100
The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	020 7361 3013

Other helpful contact numbers

Hourglass (Safer Ageing)	0808 808 8141
Action Fraud (to report fraud or financial internet crimes)	0300 123 2040
National Domestic Abuse helpline	0808 2000 247

References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre

Telephone: Chelsea 020 7811 8438 / 020 7808 2083

Sutton 020 8661 3759 / 3951

Email: patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk

No conflicts of interest were declared in the production of this booklet.

Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.

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