

A guide for care/support staff and volunteers

Who is an adult at risk?

- A person 18 or over who may need health or care services, **and**
- is limited in their ability to protect themselves from significant harm or being taken advantage of, due to:
 - ***Frailty in old age***
 - ***Mental or physical ill-health***
 - ***Physical disability***
 - ***Hearing, visual or other communication disabilities***
 - ***Learning disabilities***

What is abuse?

Actions or a failure to act which causes harm to a vulnerable person or puts them at risk

Abuse takes many forms:

- Physical
- Domestic
- Sexual
- Psychological
- Financial or material
- Modern slavery
- Discriminatory
- Organisational
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Self-neglect

Who might abuse?

- A relative or carer
- Neighbours, friends
- Paid care staff
- Another vulnerable person
- A stranger

Abuse can happen anywhere

The person may be abused in:

- Their own home
- Care/nursing homes
- Day centres
- Workplaces
- Hospitals
- Prisons
- Other places in the community

How to spot abuse

An abused person may have one or more of the following:

- Unexplained bruising, marks, genital area bleeding or injuries
- Signs of malnutrition/weight loss
- Ulcers/bed sores
- Loss of appetite/over-eating at inappropriate times
- Poor heating, lighting, clothing and scruffy appearance
- Significant changes in behaviour or how the person usually is:
 - Anxiety
 - Confusion
 - Fearfulness
 - Disturbed sleep
 - Avoiding social contacts or a specific person
 - Expressions of anger and/or frustration
 - Loss of self esteem and confidence

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What you must do

To do nothing is not an option

Anyone who has contact with an adult at risk has a duty to report actual or suspected abuse or neglect

If an adult at risk discloses abuse or neglect to you:

Do

- ✓ Make sure the immediate safety of the person
- ✓ Before doing anything else, take advice from your line manager or a senior manager
- ✓ Stay calm and try not to show shock or disbelief
- ✓ Listen carefully to what they are saying asking them to tell, explain and describe what happened
- ✓ Write down what the person said because this information may be used as evidence
- ✓ Preserve evidence, e.g. paperwork, clothing, blood, semen on the person, bedding

Do not

- ✗ Press the person for more details or show them photos of possible abusers
- ✗ Ask closed or leading questions
- ✗ Promise to keep secrets
- ✗ Contact the alleged abuser
- ✗ Pass on the information to anyone other than people who 'need to know'
- ✗ Bathe the person/clean any areas or move anything

What You Need to Record

- Write down any injuries, describing the colour, size, depth and shape
- Take photographs of injuries if possible
- Note in writing the state of the clothing of both the adult at risk and the alleged abuser
- Note what was said, using the exact words and phrases spoken, wherever possible, including dates and times
- Describe the circumstances in which the disclosure came about
- Note the setting and anyone else who was there at the time
- Write what exactly happened, not your opinion
- Use a pen or biro with black ink, so that the report can be photocopied
- Be aware that your report may be required later as part of a legal action or disciplinary procedure

Your manager or supervisor will tell you what to do next.

If you cannot tell your line manager contact Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224

In an emergency, where someone is in immediate danger, call the police on 999