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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Note- this press release is strictly embargoed until 15th June 2016**

**15 June 2016**

**Pledge your support to safeguard vulnerable adults**

People in Somerset are being asked to pledge their support to ending the abuse of vulnerable adults in the county.

The Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB), a partnership of agencies which works together to prevent abuse and neglect, is urging local residents to support their efforts in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15th June.

Richard Crompton, Independent Chairman of the SSAB, said:

“Tackling abuse is everyone’s business. By encouraging the local community to voice their concerns to us, we can help protect vulnerable adults in Somerset.

“We are asking people to sign up to a public pledge to report their concerns if they believe someone to be at risk, in recognition that safeguarding is everybody’s responsibility. It’s a very simple gesture, but by doing so, you are joining others who are committed to stopping abuse in this county. It sends a strong message to abusers that people in Somerset will look out, and speak up, for victims.”

Abuse is a violation of a person’s human and civil rights by any other person or people. It can consist of a single act or repeated acts, and can happen anywhere by anyone. It can take many forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, financial abuse, neglect and self-neglect. It can affect anyone but older people, those with physical or learning disabilities, and people with mental health issues are most often victimised.

To increase understanding of the types of abuse and neglect suffered by vulnerable older adults, the SSAB has launched a short animated film on its website:

<http://ssab.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/protecting-adults/thinking-it-report-it-campaign/thinking-it-report-it-film/>

The film portrays a street setting where everything seems normal, but behind closed doors some residents are suffering at the hands of someone they know, including carers and relatives.

Mr Crompton added: “We know from experience there are vulnerable people in Somerset who are being subjected to abuse but may be too scared, ashamed, or simply unable to say or do something about it.

“Our film uses genuine examples of the type of abuse and neglect we encounter, and that’s why we are asking people to come forward if they have a concern that something isn’t right. If you are worried about a neighbour, a friend, a relative, even someone you serve in a shop, we urge you to act on that feeling and report it to us. Your intervention could help someone, and those around them, be safer, or even save someone’s life.”

Somerset has a significantly older population than other areas and this is only set to rise as people live longer. Two thirds of all safeguarding referrals opened in Somerset (during 2014/15) related to adults aged 65 or over. Experts believe that there are many more cases that go unreported.

**How you can help**

To join the fight against adult abuse, watch our infomercial or sign up to our community pledge online at: [www.ssab.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk](http://www.ssab.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk)

If you have a concern about a vulnerable adult in Somerset, please contact 0300 123 2224 / adults@somerset.gov.uk. In an emergency always call the Police on 999.

**ENDS**

For further information, please contact the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board via:

ssab@somerset.gov.uk

**Note for editors:**

* The shared vision of the Board is to ‘work in partnership to enable adults in Somerset to live a life free from fear, harm or abuse’.
* Safeguarding adults from abuse is everyone’s business, and we adopt a zero tolerance approach to the abuse of vulnerable adults.