

Factors			Guidance and considerations		
1. Vulnerability of adult at risk	Less vulnerable	More vulnerable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there reasonable cause to suspect that the adult has needs for care and support? Remember that this includes people whose needs may not be being met by the Local Authority Can the adult protect themselves? Does the adult have the communication skills to raise an alert? Is the person dependent on the alleged perpetrator? Does the person lack mental capacity? Is what you are worried about simply an unwise decision, or is it a symptom of a more significant concern? Has the alleged victim been threatened or coerced into making decisions? 		
	 <p>As you progress along this scale the adult is likely to become vulnerable and the abuse more serious. Think about being able to describe someone's vulnerabilities and how they may impact on their experience of risk and ability to protect themselves</p>				
The abusive act	Less serious	More serious	<p>Questions 2-9 relate to the abusive act and/or the alleged perpetrator. Assessments must be made on a case-by-case basis. Less serious concerns are likely to be dealt with at initial inquiry stage only, whilst the more serious concerns will progress to further stages in the safeguarding adults process.</p>		
					
2. Seriousness of abuse	Low	Significant	Critical	<p>Refer to the table overleaf. Look at the relevant categories of abuse and use your knowledge of the case and your own professional judgement to gauge the seriousness of the concern.</p>	
3. Patterns of abuse	Isolated incident	Recent abuse in an ongoing relationship	Repeated abuse	<p>Always seek advice from your own organisation's Safeguarding Lead where there are concerns about repeated low-level harm to agree how these concerns will progress to further stages in the safeguarding adults process.</p>	
4. Impact of abuse on victims	No impact	Some impact but not long-lasting	Serious long-lasting impact	<p>Impact of abuse does not necessarily correspond to the extent of the abuse – different people will be affected in different ways. The views of the adult at risk will be important in determining the impact of the abuse.</p>	
5. Impact on others	No one else affected	Others indirectly affected	Others directly affected	<p>Other people may be affected by the abuse of another adult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always remember to Think Family Are children, relatives or other residents/service users affected or distressed by the abuse? Are other people intimidated and/or their environment affected? 	
6. Intent of alleged perpetrator	Unintended / ill-informed	Opportunistic	Deliberate/ Targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the act/omission a violent/serious unprofessional response to difficulties in caring? Is the act/omission planned and deliberately malicious? Is the act a breach of a professional code of conduct? <p><i>* the act/omission doesn't have to be intentional to meet safeguarding criteria</i></p>	
7. Illegality of actions	Bad practice – not illegal	Criminal act	Serious criminal act	<p>Seek advice from the Police if you are unsure if a crime has been committed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the act/omission poor practice (but not illegal) or is it clearly a crime? 	
8. Risk of repeated abuse on victim	Unlikely to recur	Possible to recur	Likely to recur	<p>Is the abuse less likely to recur with significant changes (e.g. training, supervision, respite, support) or very likely even if changes are made / more support is provided?</p>	
9. Risk of repeated abuse on others	Others not at risk	Possibly at risk	Others at risk	<p>Are other adults and/or children at risk of being abused?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very Likely? Less likely if significant changes are made? Very unlikely? 	

Types of abuse and seriousness	Concerns may be notified to the Local Authority but are likely to be managed at Initial Enquiry stage only. You should always seek advice from your own organisation's Safeguarding Lead. Professional judgement or concerns of repeated low-level harm will progress to further stages in the safeguarding adults' process.		Concerns of a significant nature will receive additional scrutiny, and progress further under safeguarding adult procedures. Some examples of significant harm include criminal offences which will need to be referred to the Police.		Concerns of a critical nature will receive additional scrutiny, and progress further, under safeguarding adults procedures. The Police will need to be contacted.	
	LOW		SIGNIFICANT		CRITICAL	
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff error causing no / little harm e.g. friction mark on skin due to ill-fitting hoist sling Minor events that still meet the criteria for 'incident reporting' accidents Isolated incident involving service on service user Inexplicable marking found on one occasion Minor event where users lack capacity 	<p>Medication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult does not receive prescribed medication (missed / wrong dose) on one occasion – no harm occurs Recurring missed medication or administration errors that cause no harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inexplicable marking or lesions, cuts or grip marks on a number of occasions. Accumulations of minor incidents Inappropriate restraint Withholding of food, drinks or aids to independence Inexplicable fractures/ injuries Covert administration without proper medical authorisation 	<p>Medication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recurring missed medication or errors that affect more than one adult and/or result in harm Potential serious consequences or harm occurs Deliberate maladministration of medications Assault 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grievous bodily harm / assault with a weapon leading to irreversible damage or death 	<p>Medication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pattern of recurring errors or an incident of deliberate maladministration that results in ill-health or death Use of contaminated equipment for the administration of medication
Sexual (including sexual exploitation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolated incident of teasing or low-level unwanted sexualised attention (verbal) directed at one adult by another whether or not capacity exists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal verbal sexualised teasing or banter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolated or recurring incidents of unwanted sexualised attention (e.g. touching or masturbation) without consent directed at one adult by another <i>whether or not capacity exists</i> Voyeurism without consent Being subject to indecent exposure Grooming, including via the internet and social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempted penetration by any means (whether or not it occurs within a relationship) without consent Being made to look at pornographic material against will/where consent cannot be given 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sex in a relationship characterised by authority inequality or exploitation e.g. receiving something in return for carrying out a sexual act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sex without consent (rape)
Psychological / Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolated incident where adult is spoken to in a rude or inappropriate way – respect is undermined but no/little distress caused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasional taunts or verbal outburst Withholding of information to disempower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treatment that undermines dignity and esteem Denying or failing to recognise adult's choice or opinion Cuckooing where there are additional care and support needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humiliation Emotional blackmail e.g. threats or abandonment / harm Frequent or frightening verbal outbursts or harassment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Denial of basic human rights / civil liberties, overriding advance directive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prolonged intimidation Vicious / personalised verbal attacks

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	LOW		SIGNIFICANT		CRITICAL
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff personally benefit from user funds e.g. accrue 'reward' points on their own store loyalty cards when shopping • Money not recorded safely and properly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult not routinely involved in decisions about how their money is spent or kept safe – capacity in this respect is not properly considered • Non-payment of care fees not impacting on care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult's monies kept in a joint bank account – unclear arrangements for equitable sharing of interest • Adult denied access to own funds or possessions • Ongoing non-payment of care fees putting a person's care at risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misuse/ Misappropriation of property or possessions of benefits by a person in a position of trust or control • Personal finance removed from adult's control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fraud / exploitation relating to benefits, income, property or will • Theft
Neglect (includes neglect by family members and/or unpaid carers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolated missed home care visit where no harm occurs • Adult is not assisted with a meal/drink on one occasion and no harm occurs • Adult not bathed as often as they would like – possible complaint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequacies in care provision that lead to discomfort or inconvenience – no harm occurs e.g. being left wet occasionally • Not having access to aids to independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent missed home care visits where risk of harm escalates, or one miss where harm occurs • Hospital discharge without adequate planning and harm occurs • Acts of neglect that where there are also allegations of domestic abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing lack of care to the extent that health and wellbeing deteriorate significantly e.g. pressure wounds, dehydration, malnutrition, loss of independence / confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to arrange access to lifesaving services or medical care • Failure to intervene in dangerous situations where the adult lacks the capacity to assess risk
Self-Neglect (see self-neglect guidance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incontinence leading to health concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolated / occasional reports about unkempt personal appearance or property which is out of character or unusual for the person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports of concerns from multiple agencies • Behaviour which poses a fire risk to self and others • Poor management of finances leading to health, wellbeing or property risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing lack of care or behaviour to extent that health and wellbeing deteriorate significantly e.g. pressure sores, wounds, dehydration, malnutrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to seek lifesaving services or medical care where required • Life in danger if intervention is not made in order to protect the individual
Discriminatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolated incident of teasing motivated by prejudicial attitudes towards an adult's individual differences • Occasional taunts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolated incident of care planning that fails to address adult's specific diversity associated needs for a short period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequitable access to service provision as a result of a diversity issue • Recurring failure to meet specific care/support needs linked to diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refused access to essential services • Denial of civil liberties e.g. voting, making a complaint • Humiliation or threats on a regular basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hate crime resulting in injury / emergency medical treatment /fear for life • Hate crime resulting in serious injury or attempted murder / honour-based violence

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	LOW		SIGNIFICANT		CRITICAL
Organisational (any one or combination of the other forms of abuse)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of stimulation / opportunities for people to engage in social and leisure activities Service users not given sufficient voice or involved in the running of the service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Denial of individuality and opportunities for service user to make informed choice and take responsible risks Care planning documentation not person centred 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rigid/inflexible routines Service user's dignity is undermined, and/or they are not respected e.g. lack of privacy during support with intimate care needs, sharing under-clothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bad/poor practice not being reported and going unchecked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff misusing their position of power over service users Over-medication and/or inappropriate restraint used to manage behaviour Widespread consistent ill-treatment Unsafe and unhygienic living environments (e.g. vermin infestation, faulty heating not repaired)
Modern Slavery (also consider sexual abuse)	All concerns about modern slavery are deemed to be of a significant / critical level		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited freedom of movement Being forced to work for little or no payment Limited or no access to medical and dental care No access to appropriate benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exploitation of an individual's circumstances Limited access to food or shelter Be regularly moved (trafficked) to avoid detection Removal of passport or ID documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual exploitation Starvation Organ harvesting No control over movement / imprisonment Forced marriage
Domestic Abuse (Remember Domestic abuse is not limited to partner on partner abuse, and includes familial abuse)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolated incident of alleged abuse Occasional taunts or abusive nature / verbal outbursts 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inexplicable marking or lesions, cuts or grip marks on a number of occasions Alleged perpetrator exhibits controlling behaviour Limited access to medical and dental care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accumulations of minor incidents Frequent verbal / physical outbursts No access / control over finances Stalking Relationship characterised by imbalance of power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Threats to kill, attempts to strangle, choke or suffocate Sex without consent (rape) Forced marriage Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Honour based violence Coercive control that results in harm – e.g. not taking prescribed medication for serious health conditions as a result of the alleged perpetrators beliefs
<p>A Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DASH) must be used to determine the level of risk in domestic abuse cases and a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) referral made where appropriate</p>					

If you are worried about a vulnerable adult, don't stay silent. **To do nothing is not an option.** Decisions made by the safeguarding adult team will be made based on the information available at the time.

Phone Adult Social Care on 0300 123 2224 or email adults@somerset.gov.uk or complete a [secure electronic safeguarding referral form](#)
In an emergency always contact the police by dialling 999. If it is not an emergency dial 101.