

2. Defining Who is at Risk

2.1 What is the Definition of a "Vulnerable Adult"? (Also refer to "No Secrets" - Section 2)

This policy relates to adults of 18 years of age or over. Children under the age of 18 years are protected by the Children Act 1989. A person is a "child" until they reach 18 years of age or until they get married.

The broad definition of a "vulnerable adult" is taken from "No Secrets" - Section 2.3 and 'Safeguarding Adults', page 5.

A vulnerable adult is a person *"who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, **and** who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation"*. (See "No Secrets" - Section 2.3.)

In addition 'Safeguarding Adults' emphasises the public duty of all agencies to protect the human rights of all citizens in terms of helping people access mainstream services such as the police. It also emphasises that safeguarding work is the responsibility of all agencies and must be effectively linked to other measures such as those for domestic violence which are overseen by the Community Safety Partnership.

The term "community care services" includes all social and health care services provided in any setting or context. (See "No Secrets" - Section 2.4.)

The term "harm" should be taken to include not only ill treatment (including sexual abuse and forms of ill treatment that are not physical), but also the impairment of, or an avoidable deterioration in, physical or mental health. It should also be taken to include the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. (See "No Secrets" - Section 2.18.)

2.2 What Constitutes Abuse?

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. (See "No Secrets" - Section 2.5.)

Abuse can consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal, or psychological. It may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented or cannot consent.

Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it. (See "No Secrets" - Section 2.6.)