

3. Alerting

3.1 Introduction

Safeguarding vulnerable adults is everyone's business. Everyone could be an alerter.

Alerting or raising a concern about abuse involves:

- Recognising if a person is a vulnerable adult.
- Recognising signs and signals of adult abuse.
- Responding to disclosures.
- Acting, when necessary, to protect an adult and preserve evidence.
- Reporting a concern, disclosure or allegation.

3.2 Definitions

A **concern** of abuse is where someone suspects that a person(s) is/are being abused.

A **disclosure** of abuse is where someone states that they are being abused.

3.3 Responsibilities

As an alerter, you are not asked to prove that information is true. You are being asked to log your concerns or disclosures made to you and then report them to Adult Services, Health or Police. The Police have the responsibility for establishing whether or not a criminal offence has been committed.

It is the responsibility of the relevant statutory authority to then instigate the Safeguarding Adults process, and you will receive information about this.

These procedures are written to ensure that the response to any abusive situation is at an appropriate level, co-ordinated and happens in the least intrusive way for the vulnerable adult.

3.4 Immediate Action (see flow chart page 26)

If a vulnerable adult is in a violent situation and feels in immediate danger, call the Police on 999. If the vulnerable adult is injured, call for an ambulance.

In some circumstances, the alleged abuser may also need support and possibly immediate services to make the situation safe for both parties. In these cases, we may well need to call for support to manage these arrangements, such as another worker.

Remember

- **Do not start investigating the incidents yourself.**
- **Do not talk to the alleged abuser about the incident even if they contact you and *never* give them any information about the abused person, especially *not* the abused person's whereabouts.**
- **At this stage, do not discuss what has happened with carers or relatives of the abused person.**

Following any abusive incident, remember four basic rules:

1. **Ensure safety** - look after the victim and keep them safe. Protect other possible vulnerable adults. If the perpetrator is also a service user, support them but also consider any possible further risk.
2. **Contact your Manager/or named person** immediately and tell them what has happened. Discuss with them whether the incident, allegation or disclosure is to be reported to the Police for investigation.
3. **Preserve evidence** - see Section 5 of this guidance: Preserving and Protecting Evidence.
4. **Hand write a report** of what happened in the order it happened as soon as you practically can - use anything to write the report on and keep it safe. Sign and date the report.

Where the situation does not present as an emergency but you are informing Adult & Community Services/Torbay Care Trust, the Police or Health, be prepared to give as much of the following information as you can:

- Name(s) by which the person is known, date of birth, address, language spoken and method of communication, racial origin and current whereabouts of the vulnerable adult.
- Your name and your involvement.
- What happened, where and when?
- Details of the alleged abuser, such as name, date of birth, address, language spoken/method of communication, current whereabouts and his/her relationship to the person being referred
- Whether there are any other people, including any **children**, who may be at risk.
- Details of other agencies involved with the vulnerable adult.
- Awareness of the person being referred, carers and alleged abuser to your making this referral. It is also important to pass on how the abused person feels about you making this referral.

- The likely movements of the person being referred and the alleged abuser within the next 24 hours.

Note: You may not have all of this information but give all the information you do have when making a referral.

Note: Where possible, the opinion of the abused person should always be sought when deciding whether to inform Adult & Community Services/Torbay Care Trust or the Police. There may be circumstances where you need to overrule their wishes. This would normally be the decision of your Line Manager.

Do not give information to people making enquiries but refer them to the named individual in your organisation or the Responsible Manager. Should you suspect that your Line Manager or Senior Manager could be involved in the abuse, contact the Police and/or Adult & Community Services/Torbay Care Trust directly.

You may be invited to co-operate with any investigation. This may include:

- Providing a statement.
- Attending strategy meetings and case conferences.
- Contributing towards the plans for the vulnerable adult's care and/or protection - depending upon the level of your involvement with the individual.

3.5 **What Happens to the Referral?**

It is vital to acknowledge the importance that recognising and reporting adult abuse plays in the overall protection of vulnerable adults.

Once a referral has been made to the relevant statutory agency, that agency will acknowledge the referral, and offer a brief explanation of the follow-up process.

3.6 **Confidential Alerters**

If your Line Manager or his or her Manager is the abuser or is colluding in the abuse, you may need to find someone you can trust outside your immediate agency e.g. Safeguarding Adults Team, Adult & Community Services/Torbay Care Trust; CQC or the Police.

The service user's interest is paramount and the common law "duty of care" requires that each employee has a responsibility to:

- Draw attention to any matter they consider to be damaging to the interests of a service user, carer or colleague.
- Put forward suggestions that may improve a service.
- Correct any statutory omissions.
- Prevent malpractice.

Confidential alerters will always be:

- Treated seriously.
- Treated confidentially where relevant.
- Treated with a fair and equitable manner.
- Kept informed of action taken and its outcome.

Confidential alerters should be aware of the 'whistle blowing ' policy in their own workplace, or can contact Public Concern at Work.

3.7 **Support for Alerters – The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998**

People have in the past been put off from disclosing their concerns about possible neglect or abuse because of having worries about their duty of confidentiality and/or the consequences of speaking out.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 seeks to protect genuine disclosures of such acts.

No confidentiality clause in an employment contract can be used to prevent anyone from disclosing genuine concerns about abuse or abusive practice to an appropriate person. Additionally, any person being treated detrimentally at work because of making an appropriate disclosure may be able to claim compensation at an Employment Tribunal.

For further information see:

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Public Concern at Work is an independent authority on whistle blowing and can offer advice and support.

Contact them by:

Phone: 0207 4046609
E-mail: whistle@pcaw.co.uk
Website: www.pcaw.co.uk
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