

Safeguarding adults from abuse

Who is a Vulnerable Adult?

A Vulnerable Adult is someone aged 18 or over who is, or may be:

- In need of community care services because of mental or other disability, age or illness and
- Unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation (**No Secrets 2:3**)

Devon has a multi-agency policy and procedure for responding to the abuse of vulnerable adults. (See www.devon.gov.uk/safeguarding-adults). This means we have an agreement where organisations work together with the person who we think may be abused, to safeguard that person and take what actions we can.

Devon County Council co-ordinate the policy, with the Police and the NHS sharing the responsibility for ensuring the correct process is used.

What is abuse?

Abuse is a violation of a person's human and civil rights by any other person (s). It may:

- Be a single or repeated act(s)
- Be physical, verbal, psychological, sexual, institutional, discriminatory or financial
- Be an act of neglect or failure to act

What might you notice?

These are only a few examples of possible signs, none being conclusive on their own.

Possible signs of abuse may include:

- Injuries, for example, a slap, being restrained in a chair, given too much medication
- Being involved in a sexual act you don't want or didn't agree to like watching pornography
- Weight loss
- Dehydration
- Lack of personal care
- Bills not being paid
- An overly critical or disrespectful carer who may for example bully, undermine, say you are worthless
- Sudden loss of assets, friends or family may threaten you to gain access to your money, get you to change your will for example
- Not getting to medical appointments
- Deference or submission to a suspected abuser
- Change in behaviour or mood
- Isolation from usual network of friends/family/community
- Where a carer looks after you in a way that is convenient to them, not what you need and this results in your health being affected

If you are an adult or you know an adult who may be at risk of abuse or is being abused:

Do -

- Ensure your safety or the safety of the vulnerable adult, (see contacts list below for Police etc).
- Tell someone – in Devon you can contact Care Direct on **0845 1551 007**. They will tell you what they will do with the information you give them.

Don't -

- Tell the person who you think is causing the abuse

Devon County Council will use the multi-agency procedures to work with you to look into the concerns you raise. You will be listened to and taken seriously.

Contacts:

- **Care Direct - 0845 1551 007** opening Hours 8am-8pm Monday to Friday, 9am-1pm Saturday. Outside of these times, the **Emergency Duty Team** can be contacted on **0845 6000 388** (low call rate).
- **Safeguarding Adults Team - 01392 382339**
- **Devon & Cornwall Constabulary - 08452 777 444**, ring 999 in emergencies

Mental Capacity Act 2005:

- Provides a legal framework for making significant life decisions for adults who lack the capacity to make such decisions themselves.
- Examples of the decisions the act covers are managing finances, some medical treatments and where to live.
- The act also makes the ill treatment or neglect of an adult who lacks capacity a criminal offence.
- In some circumstances, an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) can be instructed by the Local Authority or NHS to facilitate a decision making process.
- The act also covers situations for people who want to make arrangements for their care and finances in the event they lose their capacity in the future – ‘advance decisions’ & ‘lasting powers of attorney’.

More Information:

For more information see the web site www.devon.gov.uk/mentalcapacityact.htm or you can contact one of the Safeguarding Adults Officers on 01392 382339 or by the web site www.devon.gov.uk/safeguarding-adults

Further factsheets can be found online at www.devon.gov.uk/factsheets

If you have any further questions please contact **Care Direct 0845 1551 007**

A large print version of this factsheet is available on www.devon.gov.uk/largeprint-factsheets but if you would like it in a different format such as Braille or audio, or in a different language, please contact our Customer Service Centre on 0845 155 1015 or email customer@devon.gov.uk.

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