

Who is defined as a vulnerable adult?

Section Header:

- Anyone over the age of 18 who is in need or might be in need of community care services because of learning or physical disability, their age, physical or mental illness.
- Anyone who cannot take care of themselves or is unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by others. It could be any one of us at any time.

Who is defined as a vulnerable adult?

Section Header:

- Abuse can be described as a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to a vulnerable person. It may be carried out by an individual, a group, or an organisation.

Who abuses?

Abuse of vulnerable adults can happen to anyone and crosses all boundaries of age, gender, class and culture. Abusers have been known to be: -

- Professional staff
- Relatives and family members
- Paid care workers
- Volunteers
- Carers
- Other residents
- Neighbours
- Friends and associates
- Strangers
- People who deliberately exploit vulnerable people

What types of abuse are there?

- Physical Abuse – this includes hitting, kicking, shaking, and misuse of any medication, undue restraint or force feeding.
- Sexual Abuse – this includes sexual assault, rape or other sexual acts, the inappropriate touching of the individual's sexual areas.
- Psychological and Emotional Abuse- this includes threats of harm, abandonment or withdrawal of social contact, humiliation, bullying or intimidation.
- Financial and Material Abuse – this includes withholding money or possessions, intentional mismanagement or the person's finances or property, theft, fraud and embezzlement.

- Neglect and acts of omission – this includes not getting appropriate services for needs that have been recognised, avoidance of required health care, ignoring physical care needs, exposing the person to unacceptable risk, not providing or making sure there is adequate supervision.
- Discriminatory Abuse – this includes any acts that use hurtful language, cause harassment or similar treatment of the individual because of their race, gender, age, disability, faith, culture or sexual orientation.
- Institutional Abuse – this includes the use of systems, routines, practice or care that neglect individual needs and create an imbalance and control within a managed setting such as residential /nursing care or day services.
- Abuse of Civil Rights – this includes the denial of, or coercive influence on, an individual's rights to be registered and to vote, the right to be treated as an equal with dignity and respect, the right of freedom of speech or movement.

Where can abuse take place?

Abuse can happen in many different places including:

- Residential or nursing homes
- Day care centre
- Community organisation
- Church
- Hospitals
- Out in the street
- The home

Are there ways I can tell if this is happening to someone else?

Abuse can be quite difficult to spot and often the best option is to listen to what vulnerable people tell you. There is no definitive sign or symptom, but these may be signs of abuse:

- Physical: this may be bruises (in unusual places), burns, poor hygiene, sudden weight loss, and unexplained falls.
- Financial: this may be a sudden inability to pay bills, withdrawal of large amounts of money, or personal belongings going missing.
- Sexual: this may be bruising, bleeding in the rectal or genital area, reluctance to be alone with the abuser, or expressions of sexual behaviour or language in the person.
- Emotional or Psychological: this may be insomnia, loss of self-esteem, confusion, fear, and apprehension.

I am not sure I want to be involved – someone else will notice sooner or later!

It is never easy to talk about suspected abuse, but we all have a duty to protect any person who may not be able to act for themselves in these circumstances. It may be the carer and vulnerable adult require a little more support and don't know who to ask. In this instance the carer may be given some help which might then help them to provide better care for the vulnerable adult.

Remember if you ignore the situation now, it is unlikely to go away and may get worse.

Who do I report it to?

- Your Independent Living Co-Ordinator or Housing Officer
- The local social services office/Department or your social worker if you have one.
- Your local police station
- Anyone you can trust or who you feel can help you.

Confidentiality

- All referrals will be treated confidentially. Some of the abusive situations are criminal offences and the police may need to be involved. The important aim is to protect the vulnerable person and get help where it is needed.
- If there is anything you are unsure about you can contact any of the local social services offices and discuss any concerns you might have.
- You can also seek help anonymously, but if a situation is damaging or dangerous we would need to act as quickly as possible.

For more information on this leaflet please contact us:

Tel: 01925 246810

Warrington Housing Association

the Gateway

89 Sankey Street

Warrington, Cheshire, WA1 1SR

E-mail: admin@wha.org.uk

Action for Elder Abuse,

Astral House, 1268 London Road,

London, SW16 4EA

Tel: 020 8765 7000

Age Concern,

716 Knutsford Road,

Warrington

WA1 1JW

Tel: 01925 244645

National Care Standards Commission

Unit D, Off Rudheath Way,

Gadbrook Park,

Northwich, CW9 7LT

Tel: 01606 333400