



What will happen if you report your concerns?

Please note: these pages contain information aimed at members of the public.

You will be listened to, and will be given help and support. What you have reported will be passed to a Social Worker or Police Officer who will be able to support you further.

What will happen next will depend on the views and wishes of the person the concern is about, the nature and seriousness of the abuse or neglect and any possible risk to others.

Where necessary, the Social Worker or Police Officer will involve other professionals to investigate and protect the person the concern is about from further abuse.

The safeguarding enquiry is protective rather than detective and will focus primarily on reducing the likelihood of the abuse or neglect recurring. The safeguarding enquiry might take place at the same time as an investigation and enforcement by regulatory bodies such as the Care Quality Commission, or criminal investigation by the police.

Confidentiality

Information will be treated as confidential.

There may be occasions when some information needs to be shared when it is in the best interests of the 'adult at risk'.

What does the law say?

The Council, the Police and the NHS work in partnership to safeguard adults who need support.

By law the council must:

- make enquiries or request others to do so if the person at risk has care and support needs, is at risk of harm and is unable to protect themselves.
- arrange for an advocate to support any adult who needs extra help during a safeguarding enquiry or review
- work with any other agencies involved in order to protect an adult with care and support needs who is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect.

- have a Safeguarding Adults Board with members from the Council, the Police and the NHS who will work together to help keep people safe.

Friends or relatives of the adult at risk

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If the adult at risk wants their relatives and friends to be involved within the safeguarding procedures it is important that they are. This will help them to feel fully supported when dealing with difficult or distressing issues.

If the adult at risk gives their consent, it will be possible to share with you the concerns for their welfare or safety. It will also be possible to involve you within meetings about how concerns or allegations are being addressed and how your friend or relative is being supported to be safe in the future.

If the adult at risk decides that they do not wish for a relative or friend to be informed or involved, professionals will need to respect this decision. If they do not have the mental capacity to decide this themselves, a decision will need to be made on their 'best interests' under the Mental Capacity Act.

Information will only be shared in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Your role as a relative of friend within the process

Relatives or friends may have a range of roles depending on the circumstances and wishes of the adult at risk. These may include:

- supporting your relative/friend to tell professionals what their views and wishes are and to help make sure these are heard
- supporting your relative/friend through the process, including at meetings
- sharing information about the risks your relative/friend is experiencing and what their support needs are
- contributing to a plan to protect your relative/friend – this is called a Protection Plan and is a record of the agreed action to keep the person safe
- supporting an assessment of your relative/friend's needs – sometimes this might include your needs if you are a carer

If you wish, a preparatory meeting will be held with you and the social services manager leading the safeguarding enquiry to explain the safeguarding process and your role within it.

The role of an Advocate

Where someone is unable to fully participate in the safeguarding process and has no family member or friend able to support them the local authority will arrange for an independent advocate to offer the support they need.

Mental Capacity Act

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There are times when people may need help to make decisions, or may lack the mental capacity to make decisions for themselves.

In some circumstances, other people, including family, carers or professionals, may be allowed to make the decision in the person's best interests, provided they follow the guidance provided by the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

The Act is intended to assist and support people who may lack capacity and also to balance a person's right to make decisions for themselves with their right to be protected from harm.

Clear and simple guidance for everyone is provided in the Code of Practice to the Act.

[Read the Code of Practice to the Act on justice.gov.uk](https://www.justice.gov.uk/mental-capacity-act)