

Reporting skin damage through the Safeguarding Adults procedure

This document provides information to professionals, frontline staff and care providers including staff in residential and nursing care homes and domiciliary care:

- When concerned that presenting skin damage is due to neglect and acts of omission, self-neglect, or poor practice;
- It will help to decide whether to report as a Safeguarding Adults concern.

Damage to a person's skin can include bruises, scratches, skin tears, pressure ulcers. Skin damage has many causes which include neglect and acts of omission, or self-neglect, and should be looked at on an individual basis. Some causes of skin damage relate to the individual person, including factors such as the person's medical conditions and hydration.

Pressure ulcers are caused by sustained pressure, where the person's individual tissue tolerance and susceptibility to pressure has been overcome. While pressure ulcers are largely preventable, not all can be prevented and the risk factors for each person should be looked at on an individual basis. When they do occur, clinical management for all to remove harm is essential, and sometimes a safeguarding response should be considered.

The Safeguarding Decision Guide should be completed for pressure ulcers. There are six key questions to score, in the 'Safeguarding adults protocol: pressure ulcers and the interface with a safeguarding enquiry'. This should be done by a member of staff who is a practising Registered Nurse with experience in wound management, and who is not directly involved in the provision of care to the adult, in line with the Guide's directions.

The Guide will help decide whether to report as a safeguarding concern with the local authority or to manage internally.

- [Department of Health & Social Care: Safeguarding Adults Protocol Pressure Ulcers and interface with a safeguarding enquiry](#)

Pressure ulcers may occur as a result of neglect and acts of omission or self-neglect, including ignoring medical or physical care needs, or failure to provide access to appropriate health care and support, medication, nutrition and heating. In some instances this can result in significant preventable skin damage.

If there is evidence that skin damage is a result of neglect and acts of omission or self-neglect, you must:

- Record the evidence in accordance with your organisations own procedures (e.g. completion of body map, patient's or resident's notes, incident reports);
- Report a safeguarding concern to Durham County Council Social Care Direct (or relevant Local Authority), giving clear reasons why you believe the skin damage may be due to neglect and acts of omission or self-neglect;
- Report the incident to your own organisation as well, using your own incident reporting system.

Points to consider:

- Is the skin damage new? Has it happened before? Why/how it happened?
- Has there been a recent change in the person's health that would account for a sudden change in their skin?
- Have all appropriate steps been taken to prevent damage occurring/deteriorating?
- If appropriate and proportionate steps have been taken to prevent skin damage occurring or worsening but the person's skin remains unchanged - report as a safeguarding concern.

Contacts

- Social Care Direct 03000 26 79 79 or relevant Local Authority
- NHS Tissue Viability Service 01325 743179
- North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) Safeguarding Adults Team nencicb-cd.adultsafeguarding@nhs.net

Further reading:

- Nice Guidance: <http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/skin-conditions>
- [quick guide on preventing pressure ulcers in care homes](#)
- [Stop the Pressure | NHS Improvement](#)