

A magnifying glass is positioned over a light blue background. The lens of the magnifying glass is focused on the text 'Abuse don't tolerate it don't ignore it do report it!' which is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is slightly tilted upwards to the right. The handle of the magnifying glass is visible at the bottom left.

Explaining the adult protection process for victims and carers

There are a number of key agencies who work together to protect adults who are at risk of harm or abuse in County Durham: adult social care, NHS, police, probation and the Care Quality Commission.

If you have been given a copy of this leaflet it will be because we have received a report that you or someone you care for may be the victim of abuse.

There are many examples of abuse:

- Neglect – lack of food, warmth, personal care
- Physical abuse – slapping or hitting or being roughly handled
- Threats, shouting, swearing, hostile gestures
- Inappropriate touching, offensive language, rape
- Being isolated and “controlled” by another person
- Racial, sexual or religious discrimination
- Theft of money or belongings and people taking advantage of you
- Organisational abuse
- Self-neglect
- Domestic abuse
- Modern slavery – human trafficking, forced labour

People are also at risk from self-neglect to their hygiene, health or surroundings.

Consent

In order to protect you, we need your permission to look into concerns. If you do not want us to do this, we will respect your wishes even if we think that you are still at risk. This is because you are an adult and have a right to make such decisions.

However, there are some situations where we will not be able to comply with your wishes.

This is because the incident is very serious and a crime may have taken place, or other people may be at risk of harm, or where you lack mental capacity to make informed decisions and others need to act in your best interests.

Step 1 – Adult protection referral

Social Care Direct is the contact point for all concerns regarding alleged abuse or neglect. Where appropriate they will accept an adult protection referral.

Step 2 – Initial decision

A lead officer will make further enquiries about the concerns and may contact you as necessary. The lead officer will decide what to do next depending on the seriousness of the problems and risks. If the problems can be resolved speedily and are not considered serious or needing the involvement of other organisations, the matter will be concluded at this stage. If you are in need of any support or advice, this will still be arranged with you.

If the lead officer feels that you are at significant risk of abuse, the matter will be taken to the next stage – Step 3.

Step 3 – Adult protection strategy

Where possible a lead officer will aim to arrange a strategy within 5 days of the referral. A strategy is held to share information and plan appropriate actions and investigations. It can be a meeting or telephone discussion. If a meeting is held the lead officer will normally act as chair and explain ground rules confidentiality protocols for the meeting.

Step 4 –Adult protection review

We will arrange a further strategy if necessary if the investigation requires more time.

Step 5 – Case closure/debrief

The lead officer will ensure that the concerns have been thoroughly investigated before closing the case. The lead officer will provide you with relevant information in writing.

Interview

Depending on the allegation, you may need to be interviewed by the police or other professionals to obtain more details. Any police investigation will take precedence due to the possibility of criminal offences and preservation of any evidence. If the allegation is serious you may have to go to court. There are witness care staff to help you if you need to give evidence.

Working with you

As a potential victim of abuse, you have a right to be involved throughout the adult protection process. You should be asked what you think and feel about what happened to you, what you want to happen and what will make you feel safe. You will be updated regularly and involved in key decisions that directly affect you and any actions needed to keep you safe from harm.

You should be invited to any meetings that are held. You can bring someone to support you at the meeting. If you don't feel able to share your views in the meeting the lead officer will ask you who you would like to speak for you, this may be a friend, family member or an advocate. We can give you advice and information about advocacy services or organise an advocate on your behalf. Sometimes it might not be possible to invite you to a meeting. This might be because other people are being talked about in the meeting.

Where necessary we will assess / re-assess your needs, this is to make sure you are safe and your identified needs are met. We will work with you to get you the help and protection you need from professionals or care staff.

Mental capacity

If you lack mental capacity we will ensure that all decisions are made in your "best interests" in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act. It may be necessary to involve an IMCA (Independent Mental Capacity Advocate). In April 2007, the Mental Capacity Act made the ill treatment or wilful neglect of a person who lacks mental capacity a criminal offence.

Survey

We welcome your feedback and will send out a short survey for you or your representative to complete once the concerns have been dealt with.

Useful contacts

- **Social Care Direct**
Call 03000 26 79 79 to report an adult protection matter or discuss a concern.
- **Domestic Abuse Services**
Call Harbour on 03000 20 25 25 or email myharbour.org.uk
- **Hate crime**
Visit www.durham.gov.uk/hatecrime
- **Modern slavery helpline**
Call 08000 121 700 or visit www.modernslavery.co.uk

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format.

03000 261 381