

Frome Town Council Constitution

Chapter 21 Child and Adult at Risk of Harm Protection Policy

Frome Town Hall
Christchurch Street West
Frome
BA11 1EB

01373 465757
info@frometowncouncil.gov.uk
www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk

Date Reviewed: March 2026
Review Date: March 2027

A copy of this document is also available in different formats such as large print, audio or in a different language, please contact the office if this is required.

Contents

- 1. General Statement of Policy..... 3
- 2. Purpose 3
- 3. Scope 3
- 5. Responsibilities..... 4
- 6. Information 5
- 7. Safeguarding within the context of Frome Town Council work 5
- 9. Confidentiality and information sharing..... 7
- 10. Record keeping 8
- 11. Reviewing this policy..... 8
- Appendix 1. Safeguarding Process Flow chart..... 9
- Appendix 2. Procedure in the event of a disclosure or safeguarding concern 11
 - 1. In the event of a disclosure: 11
 - 2. Make sure the individual is safe..... 11
 - 3. Record the information..... 11
 - 4. Report to Safeguarding Officer 11
 - 5. Support the individual..... 11
- Appendix 3. Recording concerns and disclosures 12
- Appendix 4. Reporting a safeguarding concern to the local authority 15
- Appendix 5. Dealing with allegations made against a member of staff, Cllr, or volunteer..... 16
- Appendix 6. Types and indicators of abuse 17
 - Abuse of children 17
 - Abuse of adults: 18

1. General Statement of Policy

- 1.1. Frome Town Council believes that children and adults have the right to protection from abuse and should be able to live free from the fear of abuse.
- 1.2. Frome Town Council is committed to ensuring that disclosures of abuse and safeguarding concerns are taken seriously and acted upon appropriately.
- 1.3. Frome Town Council is committed to ensuring that our staff, Cllrs, and volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities, and are provided with appropriate information and training, in respect to safeguarding children and adults at risk.
- 1.4. It is important to understand it is not up to the Council to decide if abuse has taken place, but it is the responsibility of all individuals to report any concerns about the safety of a child, young person, or adult at risk of harm in accordance with the Policy even if they do not involve Frome Town Council staff or services.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The purpose of this policy is to outline the duty and responsibility of Frome Town Council in respect to Safeguarding. The key objectives of this policy are to:
 - 2.1.1 Explain the responsibilities of the Safeguarding Officers, Staff, Cllrs, and Volunteers in respect of the safeguarding of children and adults at risk.
 - 2.1.1 Enable staff and volunteers who receive disclosures of, witness, or suspect abuse to make informed and confident responses.
 - 2.1.2. Ensure that prompt action is taken to minimise the risk of harm occurring from any further abuse.
 - 2.1.3. Ensure that information relating to safeguarding is kept securely and only shared on a need to know basis.

3. Scope

- 3.1. Safeguarding is about protecting the safety, independence, and wellbeing of people at risk of abuse, and is everybody's responsibility.
- 3.2. This policy relates to all children, young people and adults who become known to the organisation through the course of our work and who may be at risk of abuse.
- 3.3. Assessing whether children or adults are experiencing abuse is the responsibility of professionals within the local authority. Frome Town Council's role is therefore not to assess whether abuse has taken place, but to safeguard by informing the local authority if information becomes known to us that could indicate that abuse may have taken place, or that a child or adult may be at risk of abuse.
- 3.4. For the purpose of this policy, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 and an adult is defined as a person aged 18 years or over. A young person is a child aged 13 years and over.
- 3.5. For the purpose of this policy an adult at risk of abuse is defined as anyone aged 18 and over who:
 - has needs for care and support
 - is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect
 - is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation(Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board website, "Protecting Adults")

- 3.6. This policy applies to all staff, Cllrs, and volunteers regardless of whether they have regular contact with children and adults at risk of harm.
- 3.7. For the purposes of the policy, a member of staff covers employees including apprentices, casuals, volunteers, work experience placements and trainees.
- 3.8. This policy should also be read in conjunction with other policies in the Council Constitution including the Staff Handbook (particularly the Equal Opportunities, Grievance and Whistleblowing sections), the Health, Safety and Welfare Policy and the Information Policy.

4. Good Practice Guidelines

Everyone working in direct or indirect contact with young people and adults at risk of harm must abide by the guidelines noted below.

It is possible to reduce situations where abuse may occur and below are specific examples of the care which should be taken when working with children or adults at risk of harm.

Cllrs and staff must:

- Treat all children and people with dignity and respect
- Provide an example for good conduct that others can follow
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour e.g., bullying and report allegations/suspicions of abuse
- Ensure that, when possible, there is more than one adult present during activities with children and or adults at risk of harm, or at least be within sight or hearing of others
- Respect the right of children and adults at risk of harm to personal privacy
- Encourage children and adults at risk of harm to feel comfortable enough to point out attitudes or behaviours they do not like
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret certain actions, no matter how well intentioned
- Be aware that any physical contact with a child or adult at risk of harm may be misinterpreted
- Recognise that special caution is required when discussing sensitive issues with children or people at risk of harm
- Always operate within Frome Town Council's Code of Conduct, principles, guidance, policies, and procedures

Cllrs and staff must not:

- Have inappropriate or unwarranted physical or verbal contact with children or adults at risk of harm
- Be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour or make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children or adults at risk of harm
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- Either exaggerate or trivialise any abuse issues
- Show favouritism to any individual
- Rely on your good name or that of Frome Town Council to protect you
- Believe 'it could never happen to me'
- Take a chance when common sense, policy or practice suggests another more prudent approach

5. Responsibilities

5.1. Safeguarding Officers

- 5.1.1. Frome Town Council delegates overall responsibility for safeguarding at Frome Town Council to Hannah Stopford, Community Partnerships and Development Manager, Laura Flaherty, HR Lead and Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor, and Sian James, Business and HR

Administrator as joint Safeguarding Officers.

- 5.1.2. The Safeguarding Officers should ensure that necessary reports on safeguarding issues are reported to Somerset Council.
- 5.1.3. The Safeguarding Officers are responsible for implementing arrangements for safeguarding the welfare of children and adults at risk throughout the organisation.
- 5.1.4. The Safeguarding Officers are responsible for dealing with all instances relating to safeguarding children or adults at risk that arise within Frome Town Council. They will respond to all safeguarding concerns and make appropriate referrals to the local authority.

5.2. Staff and Councillors

- 5.2.1. All staff and Cllrs have a duty to promote the welfare of children and adults at risk. It is everybody's responsibility to recognise the signs of, and to report, abuse wherever it is seen, suspected, or disclosed. Workers must also respond appropriately to any disclosure and take any immediate action necessary to protect children and adults at risk.

6. Information

- 6.1. All staff will be provided with information to enable them to recognise possible signs of abuse and respond appropriately. This information will form appendices to this Safeguarding Policy. It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Officers to ensure this information is kept up-to-date. A safeguarding process in a useful flow chart form for staff and Cllrs has been produced to help identify the type of concern and what to do if it should be reported. This can be found at Appendix 1. It is the responsibility of all staff and Cllrs to familiarise themselves with this information, particularly the information in *Appendix 6. Types and indicators of abuse*.
- 6.2. The Safeguarding Officers should complete training on safeguarding children and adults once every 2 years. New employees will also complete the online ihasco courses, Safeguarding Adults (Level 2) and Safeguarding Children (Level 2)

7. Safeguarding within the context of Frome Town Council work

- 7.1. The majority of direct work with service-users is done in the context of our offices at Frome Town Hall and the Key Centre. These are public spaces, each with a reception manned by one member of staff.
- 7.2. Frome Town Council employs one member of staff as Children and Young People's Officers whose work supports children and young people in Frome. This is mainly in partnership with other organisations and providers. Children and young people may attend Frome Town Hall or the Key Centre to access Frome Town Council's services or those of one of the tenants of the Town Hall.
- 7.3. Frome Town Council staff come into contact with adults across a wide variety of services. Generally, meetings are not on topics relating to the adult's own personal affairs, they do not, by definition, render the service users at particular risk, (although these adults may be at risk in other contexts).
- 7.4. Frome Town Council does not, in general, provide one-to-one advice sessions to young people. Should a Frome Town Council member of staff be approached by a young person seeking advice, there must be at least one other person present in the room at all times (another young person, an accompanying adult, or another Frome Town Council member of staff).

- 7.5. The majority of roles of Frome Town Council do not fall within the legally defined eligibility criteria for requesting Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (as outlined in the [DBS eligibility guidance](#)). However, for those roles that do, Frome Town Council will request an Enhanced DBS disclosure. These will also be requested if a staff member's role changes, and it becomes necessary.
- 7.6. Frome Town Council members of staff build up long-term working relationships with members of community groups who use our services regularly. It is therefore possible that disclosures of abuse could be made to Frome Town Council members of staff, or that possible indicators of abuse may be observed by Frome Town Council members of staff.
- 7.7. Frome Town Council will ensure partner organisations and recipients of grants will have their own robust safeguarding procedures in place.

8. Publicity – Guidance Notes

These guidelines should be followed when commissioning photographs of children and adults at risk of harm or when planning photography of children and adults at risk of harm at events and using visual media for publicity purposes.

The guidelines apply to both professional photographers / camera personnel and Cllrs or staff taking personal or informal photographs at Town Council events.

8.1 Child and Adults at risk of harm Protection Issues and Visual Media

- 8.1.1 For the protection of children and adults at risk of harm, it is essential that the event organiser obtains a written validation of consent from the subject(s) and their parent(s) or guardian(s) before any images are used.
- 8.1.2 The request for consent should include an explanation of what the film or footage will contain and how the images will be used.
- 8.1.3 Where Frome Town Council has commissioned a photographer or camera person to attend a Frome Town Council event, they will be requested to abide by the following requirements:
 - Only take photographs or footage at the designated event or venue
 - Ensure that they take the audience and purpose into proper consideration when publishing any photographic/film material i.e. focus on the activity, rather than full shots of children or adults at risk of harm.

8.2 Appropriate Editorial Content

- 8.2.1. All photographs used in publicity materials must fulfil the following set of criteria to ensure the publication is produced to the highest standard, the content is appropriate and falls in line with equity issues. This includes choosing images which show all sections of society including representatives from black and ethnic communities, people with disabilities etc.
- 8.2.2. Photographs must not be edited in any way from the originals, for example disproportionately re-sizing, changing colours, distorting the images or air brushing.
- 8.2.3. Visual contents or captions cannot be used as means of identifying children or adults at risk of harm. This includes names, addresses or any other unnecessary information, which could be used to trace the child or adult at risk of harm.
- 8.2.4. This information must also be withheld in all reproductions.

8.3. Copyright, Credits and Labelling

- 8.3.1 Any professional companies or organisations that provide photographs must be appropriately credited before using them. Images supplied should be cleared for copyright and with permission to print or re-produce.
- 8.3.2 All images, photographs and footage should be stored securely, with access to transparencies, film or hard prints restricted to appropriate staff. These arrangements will help to protect potentially any inappropriate use of the collection.

9. Confidentiality and information sharing

- 9.1. Frome Town Council staff have a responsibility to share information about children and adults at risk if that information may indicate that the child or adult at risk is experiencing abuse.
- 9.2. If a disclosure is made to a member of staff, or a member of staff has a concern about the welfare of a child or adult at risk, the worker should follow the Frome Town Council procedure in the event of a disclosure or safeguarding concern (Appendix 2). This includes ensuring that the person making a disclosure is aware that the worker may need to share the information and cannot promise to keep it secret.
- 9.3. Information should only be shared on a strictly need-to-know basis. This means:
 - 9.3.1. The member of staff who receives the information should inform a Safeguarding Officer on the same working day. If the member of staff who receives the information is the Safeguarding Officer, they should inform a fellow Safeguarding Officer, or, in their absence, the Town Clerk.
 - 9.3.2. The Safeguarding Officer and the member of staff will discuss the concern and decide whether to inform the relevant Safeguarding Team at Somerset Council. The decision about whether to make a referral should be based on:
 - 9.3.2.1. The welfare of the child or adult at risk is paramount. Protecting the welfare of the person who may be experiencing abuse should be the only consideration when deciding whether a referral is needed.
 - 9.3.2.2. If the Safeguarding Officer and/or the other member of staff is in any doubt as to whether a referral is needed, a referral should be made.
 - 9.3.2.3. It is not the role of Frome Town Council staff to assess whether abuse has taken place. A referral should be made if information is known that indicates that abuse *may* have taken place.
- 9.4. In the event of a disclosure, efforts should be made to get informed consent from the person making the disclosure before a referral is made to the local Safeguarding Team. However, a referral may be made without consent if the person does not give consent and there are concerns about the welfare of a child or adult at risk.
- 9.5. Information should not be shared with other Frome Town Council staff or Councillors as a matter of course. Any information that is shared should be on a strictly need-to-know basis and kept to a minimum.
- 9.6. In the event of a disclosure, the person who made the disclosure should be kept informed about what information has been shared and with whom.
- 9.7. Recording and storing information will be done strictly in accordance with GDPR and data protection legislation and guidelines.

10. Record keeping

- 10.1. In the event of a disclosure or safeguarding concern, a detailed written record must be made by the person who receives the information, as soon as possible, and always on the same day, following the Frome Town Council procedure for recording concerns and disclosures (Appendix 2).
- 10.2. These records must be stored securely, in a locked drawer or password protected file, indefinitely.
- 10.3. Frome Town Council staff may not access these records except on a need-to-know basis.

11. Reviewing this policy

The Operations and Assets Committee will review this policy and its appendices annually or sooner if required whenever there is a change in the related legislation, or an emerging risk is identified. This will include on-going review of guidance, both nationally and locally, to ensure the Council meets its safeguarding responsibilities and that there are appropriate procedures and protocols in place.

Read in conjunction with the Child and Adult at Risk of Harm Protection Policy (Chapter 21) on the website here: <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/council/frome-town-council/publications-strategic-documents/>

Appendix 2. Procedure in the event of a disclosure or safeguarding concern

It is important that children, young people, and adults at risk are protected from abuse. All complaints, allegations or suspicions must be taken seriously, including those received anonymously. This procedure must be followed by workers whenever a disclosure of abuse is made or when there is a suspicion of abuse.

1. In the event of a disclosure:

- Reassure the person concerned.
- Listen to what they are saying.
- Record what you have been told/witnessed as soon as possible.
- Remain calm and do not show shock or disbelief.
- Tell them that the information will be treated seriously.
- Do not start to investigate or ask detailed or probing questions. Only ask questions to clarify the basic facts of what they are already telling you.
- Do not promise to keep it a secret.

2. Make sure the individual is safe

If the person is in immediate danger, the police or ambulance must be called straight away on 999. Ensure prompt action is taken to minimise the risk of harm from any further abuse, maltreatment, or neglect. This is particularly important if:

- the person remains in or is about to return to the place where the alleged abuse occurred.
- the alleged abuser is likely to have access to the person or others who might be at risk.

3. Record the information

Make a full record of the disclosure, allegation, or incident as soon as possible, within one working day. Refer to Appendix 3. Recording concerns and disclosures.

4. Report to Safeguarding Officer

Report the disclosure or concern to a Safeguarding Officer immediately or as soon as possible within one working day. In the first instance this may need to be done verbally. If one Safeguarding Officer is unavailable, report to the next Safeguarding Officer. Do not report the information to more than one worker, and do not circulate it to other members of staff.

5. Support the individual

Keep in contact with the person who made the disclosure, or you have the concern about, and ensure they know they can contact you again. Ask for their permission before sharing information, but make sure they know you may have to share it without permission. Keep them informed about who the information has been shared with.

Appendix 3. Recording concerns and disclosures

It is important to ascertain and establish the basic facts, based on evidence of what is seen, heard, or smelled and to make careful notes, clearly distinguishing fact from opinion. A full record of the disclosure, allegation or incident must be recorded as soon as possible and always on the same day.

Print, sign, date, and time the record. A copy should be stored by a Safeguarding Officer in a secure place in line with the Frome Town Council Safeguarding Policy.

If writing by hand, use black ink so that documents can be photocopied if necessary. If you make a mistake, put a line through it - do not use correction fluid.

Be aware that the report may be required later as part of legal action or disciplinary procedure and that you may need to appear at a hearing or court (although this is unlikely).

What to include

- Exactly what the person has told you, or exactly what you have witnessed. Do not include opinions or assumptions.
- A description of any injuries observed and the exact location of the injuries. Give as much detail as possible.
- Any immediate actions that you have taken to reduce risk.
- The name of the person making the disclosure and, where different, the name of the child, young person or adult at risk who has allegedly been abused.
- Where and when disclosure was made, including date, time, and the names of others present.
- If you witnessed abuse, write down the date, time, and place that it happened. Also include any of this information that is known to you:
 - When and where the alleged abuse took place, including date(s) and time(s).
 - Whether anybody else was present when the alleged abuse took place or was involved in the abuse.
 - Details about the alleged perpetrator (including name, address, place of work).

Use the following template to help record a concern or disclosure:

Safeguarding report form

This form should be used to record safeguarding concerns relating to Children and/or persons at risk of harm. In an emergency please do not delay in informing the police or Somerset Council. All the information must be treated as confidential and reported to a Designated Safeguarding Officer within one working day or the next working day if it's a weekend.

The form should be completed at the time or immediately following disclosure, but after all necessary emergency actions have been taken. Please complete the form as fully as possible.

Your details – the person completing the form

Name			
Position			
Telephone		Email	

Details of the person affected

Name	
Address	

Telephone		Email	
-----------	--	-------	--

Details of the incident (please describe in detail using only the facts)

Other present or potential witnesses

Name			
Address			
Telephone		Email	

Additional relevant information (please detail anything else that you believe to be helpful or important)

--

Actions taken

Informed a safeguarding lead at FTC – who, when?			
Reported onwards?			
Who reported to		Date	
Outcome			
Follow up required?			

I have completed this form and provided information that is factual and does not contain my own views or opinions on the matter

Print Name			
Signature			
Date			

Appendix 4. Reporting a safeguarding concern to the local authority

Information relating to safeguarding children and adults at risk should be reported to the relevant Safeguarding Team. Decisions about whether to make a referral should be made in line with the Frome Town Council Safeguarding Policy, and always from the position that the welfare of the child or adult at risk is paramount.

It is generally the responsibility of the Safeguarding Officer to make a referral and to communicate with the local authority. However, to avoid the loss of information in reporting onwards, it is strongly advised that the person who had the concern or had the disclosure made to them makes the referral. If the Safeguarding Officer is not available, or another member of staff believes a referral should be made and the Safeguarding Officer has not made one, any member of staff who is concerned should make a referral.

Information in the written record should be used to make the referral. However, do not delay making the referral if a written record is not yet complete – it can be sent later.

For adults at risk contact Somerset Council Adult Social Care on 0300 123 2224 or email adults@somerset.gov.uk

For children contact Somerset Council Children's Social Care on 0300 123 2224 or childrens@somerset.gov.uk

If you have an immediate concern about somebody's safety, contact the police on 999.

When the concerns relate to a person who lives or receives services in another local authority area, both local authority Safeguarding Teams must be informed.

Where a Safeguarding Alert is made by telephone, the Safeguarding Officer must make a written record of the date and time of the referral and the name and position of the person to whom the matter was reported.

Where a Safeguarding Alert is sent by email, the Safeguarding Officer must check that the report has been received by the Safeguarding Team.

The Safeguarding Officer is responsible for keeping staff, Cllrs, and volunteers appropriately informed and up to date on what is expected of them as any investigation proceeds; and for ensuring that they are aware of their rights to representation when being interviewed; and for ensuring they receive ongoing personal support.

Appendix 5. Dealing with allegations made against a member of staff, Cllr, or volunteer

Anyone wishing to make an allegation about a member of Frome Town Council staff, Cllr, or volunteer, either in relation to any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse or non-adherence to these procedures should report it to the designated Safeguarding Officer in the first instance. Concerns about the designated Safeguarding Officers should be reported to the Town Clerk.

Allegations against members of staff, Cllrs or volunteers should be dealt with according to:

- The Frome Town Council Safeguarding Policy
- The Frome Town Council Disciplinary Policy found within Chapter 4 Staff Handbook
- The Frome Town Council Equalities Policy found within Chapter 4 Staff Handbook

The protection and welfare of children and adults at risk should be considered paramount when making decisions regarding managing allegations against members of staff, Cllrs, and volunteers.

Appendix 6. Types and indicators of abuse

Abuse, maltreatment and neglect can be passive or active; it can consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal, or psychological, or it may occur when a person at risk of harm is persuaded to enter into a relationship to which he or she has not consented or cannot consent.

Abuse can vary from treating someone with disrespect in a way that significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing actual physical suffering or failing to prevent harm. It is behaviour towards a person that can be either deliberate or an act of neglect or an omission to act, perhaps as a result of ignorance, or lack of training, knowledge or understanding.

Individuals may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. Anyone can be a perpetrator of abuse; it could be a paid carer, volunteer or a health or social care worker; a relative, friend, neighbour, or an occasional visitor; another resident or service user, or someone who is providing a service.

Abuse of children

Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. The government guidelines "Working Together to Safeguard Children" identify the following types of abuse. The NSPCC identifies possible indicators of abuse (detailed below).

Physical Abuse

This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Indications of possible physical abuse include bruising on the head, ear, neck, abdomen, back, buttocks, upper arm, back of leg, hands, or feet; burns and scalds; bite marks; scarring; broken bones (including those in different stages of healing); effects of poisoning such as vomiting and drowsiness; respiratory problems.

Emotional Abuse

This is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, or inadequate. It may involve bullying, causing children to feel frightened or in danger, humiliating them, or ignoring them. It may also involve a child witnessing domestic abuse.

Babies and younger children who are experiencing emotional abuse may:

- be overly affectionate towards strangers or people they have not known for very long
- lack confidence or become wary or anxious
- not appear to have a close relationship with their parent, e.g., when being taken to or collected from nursery etc.
- be aggressive or nasty towards other children and animals.

Older children may:

- use language, act in a way, or know about things that you would not expect them to know for their age
- struggle to control strong emotions or have extreme outbursts
- seem isolated from their parents
- lack social skills or have few, if any, friends.

Sexual Abuse

This type of abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child

is aware of what is happening. Examples of physical contact include sexual touching of any part of the body whether the child's wearing clothes or not; rape or penetration by putting an object or body part inside a child's mouth, vagina, or anus; forcing or encouraging a child to take part in sexual activity; making a child take their clothes off, touch someone else's genitals or masturbate. Examples of non-contact abuse include: encouraging a child to watch or hear sexual acts; not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others; meeting a child following sexual grooming with the intent of abusing them; online abuse including making, viewing or distributing child abuse images; allowing someone else to make, view or distribute child abuse images; showing pornography to a child; sexually exploiting a child for money, power or status (child exploitation).

Children who are being sexually abused may: avoid being alone with people, such as family members or friends; seem frightened of a person or reluctant to socialise with them; become sexually active at a young age; be promiscuous; use sexual language or know information that you wouldn't expect them to; have physical symptoms such as anal or vaginal soreness, unusual discharge, STIs or pregnancy.

Neglect

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and is the most common form of child abuse. A child may be left hungry or dirty, without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision, medical or health care. A child may be put in danger or not protected from physical or emotional harm. They may not get the love, care, and attention they need. Neglect is dangerous and can cause serious long-term damage. It can be just as damaging as other types of abuse.

Children who are being neglected may: have poor appearance and hygiene (e.g., be smelly and dirty); be hungry; have untreated medical conditions; be tired; be underweight; not have appropriate clothing (e.g., no warm coat in winter); be caring for other family members.

Abuse of adults:

Adult abuse can occur in any relationship, and it may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it. The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) identifies the following types of abuse and possible indicators.

Physical Abuse

Including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, rough handling, force feeding, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions (e.g., deprivation of food, clothing, warmth, and healthcare).

Possible indicators of physical abuse include: no explanation for injuries or inconsistency with the account of what happened; injuries inconsistent with the person's lifestyle; bruising, cuts, welts, burns and/or marks on the body or loss of hair in clumps; frequent injuries; unexplained falls; subdued or changed behaviour in the presence of a particular person; signs of malnutrition; failure to seek medical treatment.

Domestic abuse

Domestic violence and abuse include any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. It also includes so called 'honour' -based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

Possible indicators of domestic abuse include low self-esteem; feeling that the abuse is their fault when it is not; physical evidence of violence such as bruising, cuts, broken bones; verbal abuse and humiliation in front of others; fear of outside intervention; damage to home or property; isolation – not seeing friends and family; limited access to money.

Sexual Abuse

Including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult at risk has not consented or could not

consent or was pressured into consenting.

Possible indicators of sexual abuse include: bruising, particularly to the thighs, buttocks and upper arms and marks on the neck; bleeding, pain or itching in the genital area; unusual difficulty in walking or sitting; infections, unexplained genital discharge, or sexually transmitted diseases; pregnancy in a woman who is unable to consent to sexual intercourse; the uncharacteristic use of explicit sexual language or significant changes in sexual behaviour or attitude; incontinence not related to any medical diagnosis; self-harming; poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbance; excessive fear/apprehension of, or withdrawal from, relationships; fear of receiving help with personal care; reluctance to be alone with a particular person.

Psychological and Emotional Abuse

Including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, enforced social isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

Possible indicators of psychological and emotional abuse include: an air of silence when a particular person is present; withdrawal or change in the psychological state of the person; insomnia; low self-esteem; uncooperative and aggressive behaviour; change of appetite, weight loss/gain; signs of distress: tearfulness, anger.

Financial or Material Abuse

Including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions, or benefits.

Possible indicators of financial or material abuse include: missing personal possessions; unexplained lack of money or inability to maintain lifestyle; unexplained withdrawal of funds from accounts; the person allocated to manage financial affairs is evasive or uncooperative; the family or others show unusual interest in the assets of the person; recent changes in deeds or title to property; rent arrears and eviction notices; disparity between the person's living conditions and their financial resources, e.g. insufficient food in the house; unnecessary property repairs.

Neglect and Acts of Omission

Including failure to meet medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social-care, or educational services, withholding of necessities of life, such as medication, clothing, adequate nutrition and heating, failure to give privacy and dignity.

Possible indicators of neglect or acts of omission include poor environment – dirty or unhygienic; poor physical condition and/or personal hygiene; pressure sores or ulcers; malnutrition or unexplained weight loss; untreated injuries and medical problems; inconsistent or reluctant contact with medical and social care organisations; accumulation of untaken medication; uncharacteristic failure to engage in social interaction; inappropriate or inadequate clothing.

Modern slavery

Types of modern slavery include human trafficking; forced labour; domestic servitude; sexual exploitation; debt bondage – being forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they never will be able to.

Possible indicators of modern slavery include: signs of physical or emotional abuse; appearing to be malnourished, unkempt or withdrawn; isolation from the community, seeming under the control or influence of others; living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation and or living and working at the same address; lack of personal effects or identification documents; always wearing the same clothes; avoidance of eye contact, appearing frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers; fear of law enforcers.

Discriminatory Abuse

Including racist or sexist abuse and abuse based on a person's disability, age or sexuality and other forms of harassment, slurs, or similar treatment.

Possible indicators of discriminatory abuse include: the person appears withdrawn and isolated; expressions of anger, frustration, fear, or anxiety; the support on offer does not take account of the person's individual needs in terms of a protected characteristic.

Organisational and institutional abuse

This is systematic abuse by an organisation to service-users who are at risk. It includes failure to meet physical, medical, emotional, and social needs.

Indicators of organisational or institutional abuse include people being hungry, cold, dirty, or inappropriately dressed; people not receiving suitable medical care; absence of visitors; lack of social activities.

Self-neglect

Self-neglect may require intervention if the person is unable to take care of themselves. Types of self-neglect include lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety; neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health, or surroundings; inability to avoid self-harm; failure to seek help or access services to meet health and social care needs; inability or unwillingness to manage one's personal affairs.

Possible indicators of self-neglect include very poor personal hygiene; unkempt appearance; lack of essential food, clothing, or shelter; malnutrition and/or dehydration; living in squalid or unsanitary conditions; neglecting household maintenance; hoarding; collecting a large number of animals in inappropriate conditions; non-compliance with health or care services; inability or unwillingness to take medication or treat illness or injury.

Bullying and social media - cyberbullying

Also referred to as cyber bullying. It is bullying with the use of digital technologies. It can take place on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile phones. It is repeated behaviour, aimed at scaring, angering, or shaming those who are targeted. Examples include:

- spreading lies about or posting embarrassing photos or videos of someone on social media
- sending hurtful, abusive, or threatening messages, images, or videos via messaging platforms
- impersonating someone and sending mean messages to others on their behalf or through fake accounts.

Face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying can often happen alongside each other. But cyberbullying leaves a digital footprint – a record that can prove useful and provide evidence to help stop the abuse.

Indicators of cyberbullying can include becoming more secretive about their activities online, attempting to hide their online activity on their phone or computer, using their device more frequently and becoming upset when they can't, laughing at things online but doesn't want to discuss what they are, seeming to have multiple social media profiles or accounts, exhibiting behavioral changes at home or school/work, showing personality changes, especially aggressive ones and/or becoming more concerned with social status.

Gang membership and county lines

A gang is usually considered to be a group of people who spend time in public places that either see themselves (and are seen by others) as a noticeable group or engage in criminal activity and violence.

The majority of young people are not involved in gangs, but the behaviour associated with them can have a significant impact on individuals, their families, friends, and communities. County lines is the name given to drug dealing where organised criminal groups (OCGs) use phone lines to move and supply drugs, usually from cities into smaller towns and rural areas.

They exploit people at risk of harm, including children and those with mental health or addiction issues, by recruiting them to distribute the drugs. This is often referred to as 'drug running.' Criminals may also use the home of a person at risk of harm as their base of operations. This is known as 'cuckooing.'

Possible indicators of gang membership could include talking and dressing differently, not going to school/work, staying out unusually late, poor behaviour, unexplained sums of money and possessions, unexplained injuries, graffiti-style tags on possessions, carrying weapons, interest in music which glorifies weapons and gang culture, getting involved in fights and/or committing crimes such as shoplifting. Possible indicators of county line involvement include repeatedly going missing from school or home and being found in other areas, having money, new clothes or electronic devices and they can't explain how they paid for them, getting high numbers of texts or phone calls, being secretive about who they're speaking to, decline in school or work performance and/or significant changes in emotional or physical well-being.