

One Minute Guide

Safeguarding Adults for Coronavirus Volunteers

Thank you for volunteering to help keep our community safe at this difficult time. This short guide gives volunteers some information about how to protect adults who are at risk of abuse or neglect. This guide also includes some examples of situations you may be faced with and gives advice on what to do.

What is Adult Safeguarding?

Safeguarding adults means protecting the most vulnerable from abuse and neglect. We all have a duty to help protect adults who may be experiencing (or are at risk of) abuse or neglect. During lockdown, we know that there is likely to be an increase in domestic abuse, self-neglect, and use of alcohol and drugs. This may put people at greater risk than usual.

What is my role as a volunteer?

Volunteers have an important role during the lockdown, as vulnerable people may be particularly isolated, and it may be hard for them to tell someone about the abuse or neglect. They may not be getting the same face-to-face services they usually get. Volunteers are the 'eyes and ears' on the ground.

It's the volunteer role, your role, to be curious. If you notice something that doesn't feel right, tell someone. Signs might include someone you visit having unexplained injuries, or someone you speak to on the phone who seems scared or fearful. Remember, safeguarding is everybody's business.

What is abuse?

Abuse is when someone does something to another person which damages their quality of life or puts them at risk of harm. Abuse can happen once or repeatedly. It may be deliberate or unintentional. Abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual or financial. Neglect is also a form of abuse.

Which adults may be at risk of abuse or neglect?

Some adults may be more at risk than others. This can include people who depend on others for their care, are older or frail, have mental health problems, who have a learning disability or physical disability, who have dementia or memory loss, or who misuse alcohol or drugs.

Who can abuse or neglect?

Anyone can cause harm - a family member, a carer, or a stranger. It is usually someone the person knows. Some people also self-neglect, for example not eating properly, not taking their medication, or neglecting their personal hygiene or living conditions. Self-neglect can be a safeguarding issue too.

Most volunteers are there to help people, but it is possible that a small number of people may use the position to abuse someone. You need to tell someone if you have any concerns about another volunteer, for example if they are behaving inappropriately, or accepting money or gifts from a resident.

Where does it happen?

Abuse can happen anywhere: at home, in a care home, hospital, day centre or in a public place.

What should I do if I am worried about an adult?

Speak to your manager or volunteer contact about your concerns. If that is not possible, you can contact your council's **Adult Safeguarding Team** – you can normally find their contact details on the council's website. In emergency, dial 999.

How can I keep myself safe?

If a resident is offensive or abusive to you, or you feel unsafe at any time carrying out your volunteering role, tell your volunteer contact. Always follow the guidance and training you have been given, including safety guidance about social distancing.

Where can I find more information?

For more information about safeguarding adults, and how to report a concern, see your council's Safeguarding Adults Board website. Alternatively, click on the links below for a short explanation:

A [short-animated video](#) produced by the Isle of Wight council about safeguarding:

A [short video](#) about safeguarding for volunteers, produced by L.B. Waltham Forest:

Examples

Here are some examples of situations you may come across while volunteering:

- *The volunteer is talking to somebody and they notice that they seem to be afraid of their partner, or they become aware that they have some visible physical injuries.*

If volunteers are concerned that somebody is experiencing domestic abuse, please ask (**if safe and appropriate**) if they wish to talk to somebody about their experiences. The volunteer can ask how the injuries happened, or can spend time with the person, encourage them to talk and listen to their description of their home life. Volunteers should not ask any leading questions, as this can put person at risk. If appropriate, volunteers can offer to contact other related agencies on behalf of the person. Volunteers can talk to their manager or volunteer contact about their concerns, and can contact the local **Adult Safeguarding Team**, or GP surgery (111 if out of hours). **In an emergency please dial 999.**

- *The volunteer is talking to someone and there is lack of food/toiletries, or the person is unsure where is their bank card or how they access their bank account. The person may be uncomfortable speaking about their finances and try to maintain that everything is as is should be, and they don't need any support.*

This may indicate that the person may have some memory difficulties, or that somebody else is in control of their finances. It's possible the person may be experiencing financial abuse. The volunteer can listen to the person, and should establish as many facts as possible, especially if the person has access to food and necessities for the day. If the volunteer feels comfortable doing so, they can ask if somebody else is supporting them with their finances. Volunteers should listen to what person has to say and can offer to contact their local **Initial Adult Social Care Contact Team** for them so they can support them with management of their finances.

If you suspect financial abuse, volunteers can talk to their manager or volunteer contact about their concerns and can contact the local **Adult Safeguarding Team**.