



# Protection of Vulnerable Adults

## General information

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Everyone has the right to have their human dignity respected and live their life free from abuse and neglect.

Protecting the most vulnerable in society, when they need it, could ensure a better quality of life for many people. Some adults may be particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have their human rights routinely disregarded.

Local Authorities, police, the health board, regulators and other public services work together and are committed to ensuring that vulnerable adults are protected from abuse and neglect, and will take immediate action where necessary, to keep vulnerable adults safe from harm.

## Who may be a vulnerable adult?

The definition of a vulnerable adult is:

*"A person who is 18 years of age or over, and who may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or serious exploitation."*

Vulnerable adults may include people with learning disabilities, mental health problems, older people and disabled people particularly when their situation is complicated by additional factors such as physical frailty, chronic illness, sensory impairment, challenging behaviour, lack of mental capacity, social and emotional problems, poverty, homelessness or substance misuse.

## What is abuse?

Abuse is mistreatment by someone who does or says things that hurt, upset you, make you frightened or cause actual physical harm. Abuse can range from treatment that ignores your human and civil rights, causes actual mental or physical suffering and can significantly affect your quality of life.

Abuse can happen anywhere - in a residential or nursing home, a hospital, in the workplace, a persons own home, at a day centre or educational establishment, in supported housing or in the street.

### Forms of abuse include:

**Physical abuse** such as hitting, pushing, pinching, shaking, using too much medication or not allowing a person to take their medication.

**Sexual abuse** such as forcing someone into unwanted sexual activity, being touched inappropriately, rape, sexual assault, or sexual acts which you have not have consented to, or which you were pressurised into consenting to.

**Psychological or emotional abuse** such as being intimidated, threatened, verbally abused or humiliated, being blamed, controlled or harassed, being ignored on purpose or isolated from friends, family, services or support.

**Financial abuse** such as fraud or exploitation, stealing or withholding your money or spending it inappropriately, putting pressure on you to make changes to your will or mis-using your property, inheritance, possessions or benefits.

**Neglect** such as ignoring your medical or physical care needs, preventing access to health, social care or educational services, not caring for you properly, not providing you with adequate food, or putting you at risk.

Any of these forms of abuse can be either deliberate or be the result of ignorance, or lack of training, knowledge or understanding. Sometimes people may be being abused in more than one way.

## Who might cause abuse?

The person who is responsible for the abuse may be known to you and could be:

- A paid carer or volunteer.
- A health worker, social care or other worker.  
Friend or neighbour.
- Another resident or service user.
- A relative – looking after a vulnerable adult can be difficult. Carers can sometimes feel isolated and stressed.
- Someone who deliberately exploits vulnerable people.
- Anyone else with access to the person concerned.

## What should I do?

If you are being abused or think someone else is being abused, you should tell someone. Don't assume that someone else will tell and don't worry if you think you might be wrong - it is still important for someone with experience and responsibility to look into it. It is the responsibility of social services to do this.

If you or someone you know is being abused and is in immediate danger, you need to do something straight away to stop them or others being hurt. You should ring 999 and tell the operator what is happening.

If you think a crime might have taken place, such as rape, assault or theft, please ring the police and be careful not to remove or destroy any evidence.

If you are worried about contacting the police you can always contact social services to talk things over first. If you feel nervous about talking to social services, you could ask someone to talk to us on your behalf. This could be a nurse, a carer, an advocate or a friend or relative you trust.

Wherever you live, whether it's a care home or your own home or whichever place you have visited and if you've experienced or witnessed abuse, you can ring social services.

Staff members who work with vulnerable adults may be worried about the consequences of reporting abuse. You must tell someone what is happening.

You do not have to say who you are, but this may make it more difficult for us to investigate and protect you or the person being abused.

## What will happen if I report the abuse?

When abuse is reported enquiries will take place that will follow the Wales Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults, and may result in a formal investigation. This may involve several agencies such as health services or the police. Action will then be taken to ensure you or the person being abused is protected.

You will be offered support and advice to help you to make any decisions and to enable you to take action to end the abuse and ensure that it doesn't happen again.

Anything you say will be treated sensitively, but other people may have to be told to help investigate the concern.

## Confidentiality

When an allegation is made, there will be information that we may need to share with others such as the police or people who monitor the quality of registered services. We take care to ensure that this information is only shared with those people involved in the process.

## Contact details:-

If you have concerns about a vulnerable adult or would like more information, please contact:

### **Blaenau Gwent:**

Tel: 01495 315700

Email: [info@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:info@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

Fax: 01495 315265

Minicom: 01495 355959

### **Torfaen:**

Tel: 01495 762200

Email: [socialcarecalltorfaen@torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:socialcarecalltorfaen@torfaen.gov.uk)

Fax: 01495 766686

### **Monmouthshire:**

Tel: 01291 638928

Email: [monpovaduty@monmouthshire.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:monpovaduty@monmouthshire.gcsx.gov.uk)

### **Caerphilly:**

Tel: 0808 100 2500

Email: [asdit@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:asdit@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Fax: 01443 873627

### **Newport:**

Tel: 01633 656656

Email: [pova.team@newport.gov.uk](mailto:pova.team@newport.gov.uk)

If it is an emergency and you need to contact us outside of office hours please call our Emergency Duty Team on:  
Tel: **0800 328 4432**

This leaflet is also available in large print, Braille or other language formats upon request.