



Safeguarding Adults at Risk

A guide for volunteers

Who is an 'Adult at Risk of Harm'?

Definition

'a person aged 18 years or over who is, or may be, in need of community care services or is resident in a continuing care facility by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness or who is, or may be, unable to take care of himself or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.'

Hospice patients are considered adults at risk because their illness puts their independence and wellbeing potentially at risk without the intervention of appropriate health and social care. Informal carers, family and friends who provide care to adults free of charge can also be considered adults at risk.

Rights

It is important to the Hospice that we protect the rights of our patients. Like everyone else they have the following rights:

- Everyone has the right to live their life free from violence, fear and abuse.
- Everyone has the right to be respected by other people.
- Everyone has a right to make choices about their life and things that affect them.
- Everyone has a right to live in safety.

What is abuse?

Abuse is when someone does something wrong to another person that hurts, frightens them or makes them unhappy. There are lots of different kinds of abuse.

Emotional abuse

This is when people say bad things to another person. This could be when someone:

- Calls them names.
- Blames them for something that is not their fault.
- Treats them like a child.
- Laughs at them.
- Ignores them.

Physical abuse

This is when someone hurts someone else.

This could be:

- Kicking
- Hitting
- Biting
- Scratching
- Shaking them

Sexual abuse

This is when:

- Someone touches another person's body or their private parts when you do not want them to.
- Someone kissing them, getting them to touch them or making them to have sex with them when they do not want to.
- Someone showing another person pictures, DVDs or information on the Internet about sex that they do not like.

Financial or material abuse

This is when someone:

- Takes money from another person.
- Takes control of their money.
- Takes things that do not belong to them.
- Makes another person pay for their things.
- Tells another person how to spend their money.

Neglect

This is when people should help one another but do not.

For example:

- They do not feed them when they should.
- They do not support them.
- They do not keep them safe.
- They give them the wrong medication.
- They do not get them the right medical help.

Discrimination

This is when people treat a person differently or unfairly because they are different to them.

This may be because of:

- The colour of their skin.
- Their faith.
- Their sexuality
- Their disability.
- They speak a different language.

Institutional abuse

This is when paid staff do not care for a patient properly or respect their rights.

It could be:

- In a care home.
- On a hospital ward.
- In a hospice.
- In a day centre.
- In a patient's own home.

The staff might:

- Treat them unkindly.
- Ignore their dignity.
- Ignore their views and wishes.
- Not give them any choice about how they live their lives, e.g. when to get up or go to bed, what to eat.

In extreme situations a patient's very basic rights maybe ignored to a dangerous level.

For example:

- Staff give them the wrong medication.
- Staff leave them feeling cold and hungry.
- Staff are not properly trained to care for them.
- Staff do not use the right equipment to care for them.
- Staff do not follow the rules put in place to protect or care for them.

Dealing with disclosure of abuse

Everyone is responsible for protecting an adult at risk.

Who might abuse a vulnerable adult?

- Anyone could abuse them.
- It could be someone they know or a stranger.

Where can abuse happen?

Abuse can happen anywhere:

- It could happen at home.
- At work or out and about.
- At college.
- In a day centre or club.

What to do when you suspect abuse

If you suspect abuse or someone discloses to you that they are being abused, remember it is not your responsibility to investigate the claim but to support the person.

Do:

- Be open and honest about your concerns.
- Stay calm.
- Listen very carefully.
- Ensure that no one is in immediate danger.
- Call for emergency services if urgent medical/police help is required.
- Tell the person that they did the right thing in telling you.
- Express concern and sympathy about what has happened.
- Reassure that the information will be taken seriously and give information about what will happen next.
- Explain that you must tell your Line Manager.
- Inform your Line Manager immediately.
- Explain what you have heard or seen, that has given rise to your concerns.
- Give as much information as possible.

Do Not:

- Stop someone disclosing to you.
- Be afraid to act on your concerns.
- Press the person for more details.
- Promise to keep secrets or make promises that you cannot keep.
- Gossip about the disclosure or pass on the information to anyone who does not have a legitimate need to know.
- Contact the alleged abuser.

- Attempt to investigate yourself.
- Tidy up, as this may disturb forensic evidence.
- Be judgemental.
- Leave details of your concerns on a voicemail or by email.

Queries should be directed to the Line Manager or Voluntary Services Manager