

DEFINING A VULNERABLE ADULT AND WHAT CONSTITUTES ABUSE

Abuse of vulnerable adults can occur in many different forms in our society. The information on these 3 pages will help you to recognize the signs of abuse. If you suspect someone is being abused, you should report it as soon as possible.

Who is a vulnerable adult?

A vulnerable adult is any person aged 18 years or over, who is, or may be, unable to take care of themselves or are unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. This may be because they have a mental health problem, a disability, visual or hearing problems, are old and frail or have some form of illness.

Why do we need to protect vulnerable adults?

Vulnerable adults have the right to live their lives free from abuse. Everyone should treat vulnerable people with respect and dignity. They should be able to choose how to live their lives independently and receive support in doing this.

What is adult abuse?

Abuse is a violation of a person's human and civil rights by any other person. Abuse can take many forms:

Physical Abuse

- hitting
- slapping
- pushing
- kicking
- burning
- giving medication that may harm
- disciplining in an inappropriate way

Possible Signs

- fractures
- bruising
- burns
- pain
- marks
- not wanting to be touched

Neglect or Acts of Omission

- withdrawing or not giving the help that a vulnerable adult needs, causing them to suffer

Possible Signs

- having pain or discomfort
- being very hungry, thirsty or untidy
- failing health

Discriminatory Abuse

- abusing a person because of their ethnic origin, religion, language, age, sexuality, gender or disability

Possible Signs

- the person is not receiving the care they require
- their caregiver is over critical or makes insulting remarks about the person
- the person is made to dress differently from how they wish

Institutional Abuse

- abuse or mistreatment by an organization or by any individual within a building where the person is living or receiving care

Possible Signs

- the person has no personal clothing or possessions
- there is no care plan for them
- he or she is often admitted to the hospital
- there are instances of professionals having treated them badly or unsatisfactorily or acting in a way that causes harm to the person