

**SAFEGUARDING IS  
EVERYONE'S  
RESPONSIBILITY**

[safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk](http://safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk)

# **A guide for Councillors**

***My role in safeguarding Adults  
at risk of  
abuse or neglect***



Warwickshire  
Safeguarding  
Adults Board

***“Safeguarding is everyone’s business and consequently is part of everyone’s role. Any person may recognise and report abuse or neglect, and everyone can play a part in building communities where abuse does not happen.”***

(LGA Briefing: Safeguarding Adults 2015)

Safeguarding is a crucial aspect of local authority work, linking to many local agendas, including police and criminal justice, care quality, disability hate crime, community safety and cohesion, domestic violence, forced marriage, and support for carers.

Growing awareness of the prevalence of abuse makes it all the more urgent and necessary for councillors to take action locally to ensure that everyone, working with children, young people and adults and the general public are:

- ***made aware of abuse and neglect,***
- ***able to recognise and report it,***
- ***know that they have a responsibility to act; and***
- ***able to access the right level of support, choice and advocacy.***

Councillors have a responsibility to report safeguarding concerns to the appropriate organisation or responsible body. As Community leaders, championing the wellbeing of your constituents, you are in a position to:

- ***raise awareness of safeguarding***
- ***account to your constituents for what has been done***
- ***ask questions about the outcomes of safeguarding***
- ***know who takes the lead for safeguarding in your area***

## **What is 'safeguarding adults'?**

Safeguarding refers to work aimed at preventing or stopping abuse and neglect of adults who need care and support, and who are more at risk of harm because of those needs.

Safeguarding adults takes place in communities through a number of different factors:

- ***Awareness raising and a commitment to tackle abuse***
- ***Health and social care services and police responses that are of high quality***
- ***Effective responses to allegations of abuse or neglect***
- ***Providing access to services needed, advocacy, justice and support***
- ***Using learning to improve services***

The Care Act 2014 gives adult safeguarding a legal basis, effective from 1 April 2015. It replaces the Department of Health's Guidance 'No Secrets' (DH

2000), which was the first comprehensive policy framework for safeguarding adults.

Safeguarding adults differs from the safeguarding and protection of children. A key difference is the legal expectation that children are protected from physical or psychological damage, but adults with mental capacity have a right to make their own choices, take risks, be free from coercion, and to be consulted and involved in their own safeguarding plans.

## Who are we safeguarding?

Anyone can be at risk of abuse or neglect. The adult safeguarding duties under the Care Act 2014 apply to an adult, aged 18 or over who:

- a)** has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and;
- b)** is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- c)** as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

Care and support is the mixture of practical, financial and emotional support for adults who need extra help to manage their lives and be independent – including older people, people with a disability or long-term illness, people with mental health problems, and carers.

## Types of abuse

There are many different types of abuse; some examples are:

- ***Physical abuse***
- ***Emotional/psychological abuse***
- ***Sexual abuse***
- ***Financial or material abuse***
- ***Organisational abuse***
- ***Discriminatory abuse***
- ***Neglect and acts of omission***
- ***Self-neglect***
- ***Domestic abuse***
- ***Modern slavery***

## Who are the abusers?

Lots of different people may abuse adults. Some examples are:

- ***People who deliberately target vulnerable adults***
- ***Members of the adult's own family and friends***
- ***People who are employed to care for adults***

Sometimes people are not actually aware that they are abusing someone. Carers of adults may become abusive because they are stressed and tired. It is still important that you report these situations, as Adult Social Care can help to reduce pressure on stressed carers.

## What are the signs of abuse?

There are many signs of abuse – ask if you are not sure!

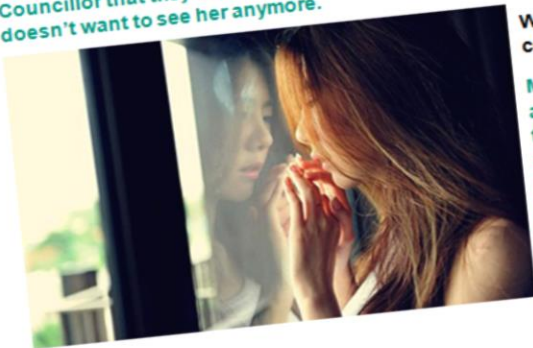
Some examples are:

- ***The person looks dirty or is not dressed properly***
- ***The person never seems to have money***
- ***The person has an injury that is difficult to explain***
- ***The person seems frightened***

There may be other explanations but these can be signs of abuse.

### Sexual abuse

M is 27 years old. She has a history of mental health problems. She has told her local councillor that when she was recently unwell and receiving treatment in private hospital, she became friends with her male care worker. She told the Councillor that they had a sexual relationship but he has now told her he doesn't want to see her anymore.



Why would this be considered to be abuse?

M would be viewed to be a vulnerable adult at the time of her hospital admission. The male care worker was in a position of responsibility and therefore abused this position of trust.

Safeguards required:

The Councillor needs to report the incident to the local authority, adult social services.

## What are your responsibilities as a Councillor?

Councillors have a key role to play in safeguarding adults in a number of ways including:

- *Ensuring that through the decisions you take, or through your participation in scrutiny activities, you contribute to preventing abuse and neglect occurring*
- *Assuring yourselves that there are robust arrangements in place across key partners (particularly councils, the NHS and Police) to respond to concerns about abuse and neglect*
- *Having a good understanding of the range of abuse and neglect issues that can affect adults and of the importance of balancing safeguarding with empowerment.*
- *Raising awareness about the abuse and neglect of adults in their ward work*
- *Understanding prevention and the importance of upholding human rights; ensuring you discuss with the individual the action you are going to take in respect of any disclosure of abuse or neglect made to you.*
- *Being aware of how to report safeguarding concerns in general, or allegations of abuse involving other Councillors, or Officers in a position of trust.*

You are in a unique position to raise awareness of adult safeguarding in your communities. You may become aware of individual cases of abuse through your work with constituents and may need to signpost them to the relevant support services.

## Financial abuse

Miss M lives at home alone and is housebound. She relies upon the help of a neighbour to collect her pension and pay her bills. Miss M always speaks fondly of her neighbour saying she would be totally isolated without this support.



A local councillor visiting Miss M notices that the house is very cold and damp, with minimal furniture and threadbare carpets. When asked if the house is always cold, she advised that she had her gas cut off some months ago due to not being able to pay her gas bill. She advised that when she contacted the bank, they told her she didn't have enough money to cover the cost of the bill. Miss M advises that she doesn't understand how this has happened because she thought she had a small amount of savings, but they don't seem to be there anymore.

**Why would this be considered to be abuse?**

Miss M has put her trust in her neighbour to help with management of her household bills. However it appears the bills have not been paid and her savings are no longer in the bank.

**Safeguards required:**

- The councillor or Miss M needs to report the incident to the local authority, social services department.
- Miss M needs to be advised to report the possible theft to the police.



## Who else has responsibility for Safeguarding Adults?

Alongside the NHS and the Police, councils have a key responsibility to lead in preventing the abuse and neglect of adults with care and support needs and in ensuring that there is a good response when concerns are raised, in accordance with the requirements of the Care Act 2014.

### Warwickshire Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB)

The Care Act 2014 requires each local authority to set up a Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) with core membership from the following organisations, as well as having the powers to include other relevant bodies:

- **Local Authority**
- **Police**
- **NHS (specifically the local Clinical Commissioning Group)**

WSAB aims to help and protect individuals who it believes to have care and support needs and who are at risk of neglect and abuse, and are unable to protect themselves, and to promote their wellbeing.

WSAB achieves its objective, through the co-ordination of partners' activities in relation to safeguarding and ensuring the effectiveness of what those partner organisations do for safeguarding purposes.

## **Reporting safeguarding concerns procedures**

If you suspect that abuse is occurring or a disclosure has occurred, this situation must be prioritised and responded to by reporting the matter to either or the following:

### ***Contact Adult Social Care:***

**01926 412080** - Warwickshire Adult Social Care teams can offer advice and support to you and, where necessary, arrange appropriate services

### ***Warwickshire Police:***

**101** - To report a non-emergency crime or raise a concern about abuse

**999** - To report an emergency if an adult is in immediate danger

### ***Strategic Director – People Group, Warwickshire County Council:***

**01902 412665** - To report allegations or suspicions of abuse by Councillors or, Officers in a position of trust

## **General safeguarding advice**

For any general safeguarding information/advice please visit the Safeguarding Warwickshire website at [www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk](http://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk) or email [WSAB@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:WSAB@warwickshire.gov.uk)

## Good practice guidelines

It is recognised that not all Councillors will have direct contact with adults with care and support needs as part of their roles. However; some will as part of their ward councillor role or for civic duties.

Councillors should ensure, wherever possible, that they do not have unsupervised contact with vulnerable people in their role as a councillor to prevent the risk of an allegation of inappropriate behaviour.

The **guidelines illustrated in the table below** are intended to be a general statement of good practice and contain advice designed to safeguard adults at risk, whilst **also protecting you** from situations where false allegations could be made in the course of your day to day work on behalf of the council.

## In the course of your day to day work on behalf of the council

Do.....

Do not.....

✓ Be professional, use common sense and maintain the highest standards of personal behaviour at all times	✗ Have inappropriate physical / verbal contact with an adult
✓ Where appropriate, be identifiable – wear a form of identification	✗ Discriminate against an adult on the grounds of their age, gender, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation
✓ If physical contact is necessary i.e. in the event of an emergency, explain and discuss these actions with the person first	✗ Engage in physical intervention unless emergency situation, where there would be a real or actual risk to others
✓ Respect the adult's right to privacy	✗ Assume that someone else will recognise and report when an adult is at risk of abuse or neglect
✓ Maintain an appropriate distance between yourself and the adult	✗ Allow bullying or the use of inappropriate language
✓ Obtain written consent for the taking of photos for publicity purposes	✗ Let allegations of abuse which an adult makes be ignored or go unrecorded
✓ Treat all adults with dignity and respect	✗ Administer medication unless specifically trained and approved

**In the event of a disclosure being shared with you by someone experiencing abuse or neglect**

**Do.....**

**Do not.....**

✓ Remain calm, approachable and receptive	× Promise confidentiality
✓ Listen carefully, without interrupting	× Ask leading or probing questions
✓ Acknowledge you understand how difficult this may be	× Investigate
✓ Make it clear that you are taking what is said seriously	× Repeatedly question or ask the individual to repeat the disclosure
✓ Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling you	× Discuss the disclosure with people who do not need to know
✓ Let them know that you'll do everything you can to help them	× Delay in reporting the disclosure to Adult Social Services, or other relevant body
✓ Make a written record of exactly what has been said.	× Attempt to speak to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect

**For any further information please contact:**

**WSAB Business Manager  
Warwickshire County Council  
Saltisford building 2  
Ansell Way  
Warwick**

**Email: [WSAB@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:WSAB@warwickshire.gov.uk)**

**Tel: 07766 367414 / 01926 742981**