

ADULT ABUSE

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the use of physical force or mistreatment of one person by another which may or may not result in actual physical injury. This may include hitting, pushing, rough handling, exposure to heat or cold, force feeding, improper administration of medication, denial of treatment, misuse or illegal use of restraint and deprivation of liberty. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is considered a form of physical AND sexual abuse.

Sexual violence and abuse

Sexual abuse is 'any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful, or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability).

Sexual violence and abuse can take many forms and may include non-contact sexual activities, such as indecent exposure, stalking, grooming, being made to look at or be involved in the production of sexually abusive material, or being made to watch sexual activities. It may involve physical contact, including but not limited to non-consensual penetrative sexual activities or non- penetrative sexual activities, such as intentional touching (known as groping). Sexual violence can be found across all sections of society, irrelevant of gender, age, ability, religion, race, ethnicity, personal circumstances, financial background or sexual orientation. *The definitions of 'sexual violence and abuse' and 'domestic violence and abuse' are from "Stopping*

Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland, A seven year strategy. March 2016

Psychological / Emotional Abuse

Psychological / emotional abuse is behaviour that is psychologically harmful or inflicts mental distress by threat, humiliation or other verbal/non-verbal conduct. This may include threats, humiliation or ridicule, provoking fear of violence, shouting, yelling and swearing, blaming, controlling, intimidation and coercion.

Financial Abuse

Financial abuse is actual or attempted theft, fraud or burglary. It is the misappropriation or misuse of money, property, benefits, material goods or other asset transactions, which the person did not or could not consent to, or which were invalidated by intimidation, coercion or deception. This may include exploitation, embezzlement, withholding pension or benefits or pressure exerted around wills, property or inheritance.

Institutional Abuse

Institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult by a regime or individuals in settings which adults who may be at risk reside in or use. This can occur in any organisation, within and outside Health and Social Care (HSC) provision. Institutional abuse may occur when the routines, systems and regimes

result in poor standards of care, poor practice and behaviours, inflexible regimes and rigid routines which violate the dignity and human rights of the adults and place them at risk of harm. Institutional abuse may occur within a culture that denies, restricts or curtails privacy, dignity, choice and independence. It involves the collective failure of a service provider or an organisation to provide safe and appropriate services, and includes a failure to ensure that the necessary preventative and/or protective measures are in place.

Neglect

Neglect occurs when a person deliberately withholds, or fails to provide, appropriate and adequate care and support, which is required by another adult. It may be through a lack of knowledge or awareness, or through a failure to take reasonable action given the information and facts available to them at the time. It may include

physical neglect to the extent that health or well-being is impaired, administering too much or too little medication, failure to provide access to appropriate health or social care, withholding the necessities of life, such as adequate nutrition, heating or clothing, or failure to intervene in situations that are dangerous to the person concerned or to others, particularly when the person lacks the capacity to assess risk.

The Safeguarding Adults: Prevention and Protection in Partnership Policy does not include self-harm or self-neglect within the definition of an 'adult in need of protection'. Each individual set of circumstances will require a professional HSC assessment to determine the appropriate response and consider if any underlying factors require a protection response. For example, self-harm may be the manifestation of harm which has been perpetrated by a third party and which the adult feels unable to disclose.

Exploitation

Exploitation is the deliberate maltreatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over another person; to take advantage of another person or situation usually, but not always, for personal gain from using them as a commodity. It may manifest itself in many forms including slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, domestic violence and abuse, sexual violence and abuse, or human trafficking.

Domestic violence and abuse

Domestic violence or abuse is 'threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member'. Domestic violence and abuse is essentially a pattern of behaviour, which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another. It is usually frequent and persistent. It can include violence by a son, daughter, mother, father, husband, wife, life partner or any other person who has a close relationship with the victim. It occurs right across society, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnic or religious group, sexual orientation, wealth, disability or geography. The response to any adult facing this situation will usually require a referral to specialist services such as Women's Aid or the Men's Advisory Project. In high risk cases a referral will also be made to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment (MARAC) process. Specialist services will then decide if the case needs to be referred to a HSC Trust for action under the safeguarding procedures. If in doubt, anyone with a concern can ring the Domestic and Sexual Violence helpline (0808 802 1414) to receive advice and guidance about how best to proceed.

Human Trafficking/Modern Slavery

Human trafficking/modern slavery involves the acquisition and movement of people by improper means, such as force, threat or deception, for the purposes of exploiting them. It can take many forms, such as domestic servitude, forced criminality, forced labour, sexual exploitation and organ harvesting. Victims of human trafficking/modern slavery can come from all walks of life; they can be male or female, children or adults, and they may come from migrant or indigenous communities. The response to adults at risk experiencing human trafficking/modern slavery will always be to report the incident to the Police Service.

Hate Crime

Hate crime is any incident which constitutes a criminal offence perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by prejudice, discrimination or hate towards a person's actual or perceived race, religious belief, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion or gender identity. The response to adults at risk experiencing hate crime will usually be to report the incident to the Police Service.

Identifying adult abuse

It is abuse when someone misuses their power or control over another person, causing harm or distress. The abuser could be in a close relationship with the adult at risk. They could be someone the adult at risk depends on and trusts.

An abuser could be a:

- partner
- relative or other family member
- person entrusted to act on behalf of the adult in some aspect of their affairs
- service or care provider
- neighbour
- health or social care worker or professional
- employer
- volunteer or another service user
- person or people who have no previous connection to the victim

If you suspect abuse, exploitation or neglect, it is important that you report your concerns to the Adult Protection Gateway Service at your local Health and Social Care Trust or the police.

- [Who to contact if you suspect abuse, exploitation or neglect](#)

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is physical force or mistreatment of one person by another which might or might not cause physical injury. This type of abuse includes:

- hitting
- pushing
- rough handling
- exposure to heat or cold
- force-feeding
- improper administration of medication
- denial of treatment
- misuse or illegal use of restraint
- not being allowed to go where you wish, when you wish

Signs of physical abuse are:

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

Psychological or emotional abuse

Psychological or emotional abuse is harmful behaviour that can cause mental distress. It can involve both verbal and non-verbal abuse which can scare, humiliate and isolate a person. This may include:

- threats
- humiliation or ridicule
- provoking fear of violence
- shouting, yelling and swearing
- blaming
- controlling
- intimidation
- coercion

Signs of psychological or emotional abuse are:

- being withdrawn
- too eager to do everything they are asked
- showing compulsive behaviour
- not being able to do things they used to
- not being able to concentrate or focus

Financial abuse

Financial abuse happens if someone tries to steal, steals or defrauds you of your money, goods or property. This includes:

- exploitation
- embezzlement
- withholding pension or benefits
- exerting pressure around wills, property or inheritance

Signs of financial abuse are:

- having unusual difficulty with finances
- not having enough money
- being too protective of money and things they own
- not paying bills
- not having normal home comforts

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is unwanted sexual activity or sexual behaviour that happens without consent or understanding.

Sexual violence and abuse can be physical contact or non-contact sexual activities, such as:

- indecent exposure
- stalking
- grooming
- forced to look at or be involved in producing sexually abusive material
- forced to watch sexual activities

Possible signs are:

- genital itching, soreness or having a sexually transmitted disease
- using bad language
- not wanting to be touched
- behaving in a sexually inappropriate way
- changes in appearance

Institutional abuse

Institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult at risk by a regime or individuals. It takes place within settings and services that adults at risk live in or use, including any organisation, in or outside the Health and Social Care sector.

Institutional abuse may occur:

- when routines, systems and regimes result in poor standards of care
- when poor practice and behaviours are in place
- within strict regimes and rigid routines which violate the dignity and human rights of the adults and place them at risk of harm
- within a culture that denies, restricts or curtails privacy, dignity, choice and independence

Possible signs are:

- the person has no personal clothing or belongings
- there is no care plan for them
- they are admitted often to hospital
- professionals having treated them badly or unsatisfactorily or acting in a way that cause harm to the person

Identifying neglect

Neglect occurs when a person deliberately withholds, or fails to provide, suitable and adequate care and support needed by another adult. It may be through a lack of knowledge or awareness, or through a decision not to act when they know the adult in their care needs help. It may impair the health or well-being of an adult.

Possible signs are:

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

Identifying exploitation

Exploitation is the deliberate maltreatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over another person. It is taking advantage of another person or situation usually, but not always, for personal gain.

Exploitation comes in many forms, including:

- slavery
- being controlled by a person or a group
- forced labour
- domestic violence and abuse
- sexual violence and abuse
- human trafficking

Recognising signs of harm or abuse

You might become aware that an adult is at risk of harm when:

- you see or hear something
- they tell you about abuse, exploitation or neglect happening to them
- a friend, family member or somebody tells you something that causes you concern
- you notice injuries or physical signs that cause you concern
- you notice the victim or abuser behaving in a way that alerts something may be wrong