

# Safeguarding Adults

## Introduction

We all have the right to live in a safe environment where we are not abused or neglected. It is never acceptable. It is a violation of one's rights as a human being and it should not be tolerated. Organisations in Devon work together to help people stay safe, to prevent abuse happening and to reduce the harm where it does occur.

## What is abuse?

Abuse is when someone is treated in a way that harms, hurts or exploits them. It happens when someone has power over them and they do not agree to what is happening to them.

Abuse can take many forms. It can range from someone shouting in a way that undermines a person's confidence and frightens them, to causing physical pain, suffering and even death. It can involve sexual abuse where an adult cannot or does not consent. It can involve financial abuse including theft of property or taking over control of someone's finances. It also includes the failure to look after someone or provide good quality care.

Abuse can happen just once or many times and can affect other people too. It can be done on purpose or by someone who may not realise they are doing it.

The harm may happen anywhere, for example, at home, in a public place, in a hospital, a care home, College, workplace or at a day centre.

Action that RDUH staff will take if concerned that abuse is occurring to an adult:

If an adult is experiencing abuse and is unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect, staff have a duty to consider the safety of the person and will talk to them about whether they would like a referral made to Devon County Council's Safeguarding Team. If the person is in immediate danger, action will be taken straight away to make sure they are safe. This may involve the Police.

If the person lacks capacity to make the decision about a referral to Devon County Council's Safeguarding Team, staff may do this in their best interest. They also have a duty to report concerns of abuse if they believe that other adults may be at risk or if a crime has been committed.

## What will happen next?

RDUH staff will be asked to give details about the situation.

- If the adult is at risk of immediate or serious harm, action will be taken straight away to make sure they are safe. Organisations will work together to stop the abuse.
- In other cases, the action taken will depend on the wishes of the adult at risk and the seriousness of the situation.
- Staff from the Safeguarding Adult Team at Devon County Council (or the local authority where the person lives) will contact the person being abused. They will work with the adult at risk to find out what they would like to happen, understand the risks they are facing and agree how to deal with the situation, and put a plan in place to protect them. Action will be undertaken to stop the abuse from happening again.

- If the adult at risk has substantial difficulty in being involved in the safeguarding process, an appropriate person who can represent them or an independent advocate will be involved to make sure the adult's views and wishes are taken into account.
- If the adult at risk does not have the capacity to make an informed choice about how to stay safe, they will be carefully supported and protected in their best interests.

Talk to professionals such as your GP or social worker about your concerns, or ask to speak to Devon County Council's Adult Social Care on **0345 155 1007**.

Call Action on Elder Abuse on **0808 808 8141** for advice.

If you believe a crime is being, or has been, committed – whether it's physical abuse or financial – talk to the police or ask someone you trust to do so on your behalf.

## What help is available if someone is being abused?

Call **999** straight away if it is an emergency and the abuse is putting your own or someone's immediate safety at risk.

Otherwise contact Devon County Council Adult Social on **0345 155 1007** or email,

**For Eastern Services:**  
[safeguardingadultseast-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:safeguardingadultseast-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)

**For Northern Services:**  
[safeguardingadultsnorth-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:safeguardingadultsnorth-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)

The Adult Social Care Team are available to take calls between 8am and 5pm Monday to Thursday, 9am to 4.30pm on Fridays and from 9am to 1pm on Saturdays. Outside of these hours and on Sundays and Bank Holidays, in emergency only, please contact our Emergency Duty Service on **0345 6000 388**.

There are many people you can talk to. If you feel you are being abused or neglected:

Don't worry about feeling you are making a fuss – tell someone you trust as soon as possible.

Speak to friends or care workers who may have an understanding of the situation and be able to take steps quickly to improve the situation.

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by Royal Devon staff undertaking procedures at the Royal Devon hospitals.

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