

## A guide for care/support staff and volunteers

### Who is an adult at risk?

- A person 18 or over who may need health or care services, **and**
- is limited in their ability to protect themselves from significant harm or being taken advantage of, due to:
  - *Frailty in old age*
  - *Mental or physical ill-health*
  - *Physical disability*
  - *Hearing, visual or other communication disabilities*
  - *Learning disabilities*

### What is abuse?

Actions or a failure to act which causes harm to a vulnerable person or puts them at risk

Abuse takes many forms:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Financial
- Sexual
- Neglect
- Discrimination

### Who might abuse?

- A relative or carer
- Neighbours, friends
- Paid care staff
- Another vulnerable person
- A stranger

### Abuse can happen anywhere

The person may be abused in:

- Their own home
- Care/nursing homes
- Day centres
- Workplaces
- Hospitals
- Prisons
- Other places in the community

### How to spot abuse

An abused person may have one or more of the following:

- Unexplained bruising, marks, genital area bleeding or injuries
- Signs of malnutrition/weight loss
- Ulcers/bed sores
- Loss of appetite/over-eating at inappropriate times
- Poor heating, lighting, clothing and scruffy appearance
- Significant changes in behaviour or how the person usually is:
  - Anxiety
  - Confusion
  - Fearfulness
  - Disturbed sleep
  - Avoiding social contacts or a specific person
  - Expressions of anger and/or frustration
  - Loss of self esteem and confidence

## A guide for care/support staff and volunteers

### What you must do

#### To do nothing is not an option

Anyone who has contact with an adult at risk has a duty to report actual or suspected abuse or neglect

#### If an adult at risk discloses abuse or neglect to you:

##### Do

- ✓ Make sure the immediate safety of the person
- ✓ Before doing anything else, take advice from your line manager or a senior manager
- ✓ Stay calm and try not to show shock or disbelief
- ✓ Listen carefully to what they are saying asking them to tell, explain and describe what happened
- ✓ Write down what the person said because this information may be used as evidence
- ✓ Preserve evidence, e.g. paperwork, clothing, blood, semen on the person, bedding

##### Do not

- ✗ Press the person for more details or show them photos of possible abusers
- ✗ Ask closed or leading questions
- ✗ Promise to keep secrets
- ✗ Contact the alleged abuser
- ✗ Pass on the information to anyone other than people who 'need to know'
- ✗ Bathe the person/clean any areas or move anything

### What You Need to Record

- Write down any injuries, describing the colour, size, depth and shape
- Take photographs of injuries if possible
- Note in writing the state of the clothing of both the adult at risk and the alleged abuser
- Note what was said, using the exact words and phrases spoken, wherever possible, including dates and times
- Describe the circumstances in which the disclosure came about
- Note the setting and anyone else who was there at the time
- Write what exactly happened, not your opinion
- Use a pen or biro with black ink, so that the report can be photocopied
- Be aware that your report may be required later as part of a legal action or disciplinary procedure

**Your manager or supervisor will tell you what to do next.**

**If you cannot tell your line manager contact Somerset Direct on 0845 345 9133**

**In an emergency, where someone is in immediate danger, call the police on 999**