

**Healthwatch Wirral**  
**Safeguarding Procedures & Guidance**  
**2025**

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### Discussing concerns

If staff or volunteers have safeguarding concerns about an adult, unless there is immediate risk or a need for urgent medical treatment they should, as soon as possible, initially speak to the Safeguarding Lead. If the Safeguarding Lead is unavailable or implicated in the concerns, the Chief Officer should be contacted directly, moving to the Chair of the Board if necessary.

**Safeguarding Lead(s) – Kirsteen Sheppard, Jacqueline Canning**

**Chief Officer – Karen Prior**

**Chair of Board – Bill Wylie**

These individuals will be trained in safeguarding procedures, including additional awareness and guidance relating to adults in specific circumstances.

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Staff/Volunteers should consult directly with the relevant Adult Social Care department if:

- You are unsure, or disagree, after internal discussion as to whether adult safeguarding concerns exist
- When you are unable to consult promptly or at all with your internal contact
- When concerns relate to the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy

Where a volunteer/student identifies concerns, upon discussing the concerns, the safeguarding lead will assess, where necessary, who will proceed with making a referral and following the remainder of the Safeguarding Procedure.

**The Role and Responsibilities of the Safeguarding Lead are:**

- To ensure all staff, students or volunteers are aware of what they should do and who they should go to if they have concerns about an adult experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect
- To ensure any concerns are acted on within timeframes, clearly recorded, referred on where necessary and, followed up to ensure the issues are addressed

**URGENT MEDICAL TREATMENT, ENSURING IMMEDIATE SAFETY AND MAKING A REFERRAL MUST NOT BE DELAYED BY THE UNAVAILABILITY OF INTERNAL/DESIGNATED CONTACTS**

**Making a referral**

Safeguarding Adult referrals should be made to the Wirral Council on the same day as the concerns are identified. Details are available on <https://wirralsapb.co.uk/>

The person making the referral should provide the following information, if available.

*Absence of information must not delay a referral:*

Details of referrer:

- name, address, and telephone number
- name of organisation
- relationship to the adult concerned

Details of the adult concerned:

- name(s), address, and telephone number
- date of birth, or age
- details of any other members of the household including children

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- information about the primary care needs of the adult, that is, disability or illness
- ethnic origin and religion
- gender (including transgender and sexuality)
- communication needs of the adult concerned due to sensory or other impairments (including dementia), including any interpreter or communication requirements
- whether the adult concerned knows about the referral
- whether the adult concerned has consented to the referral and, if not, on what grounds the decision was made to refer
- what is known of the person's mental capacity and their views about the abuse or neglect and what they want done about it (if that is known at this stage)
- details of how to gain access to the person and who can be contacted if there are difficulties
- Information about the abuse or neglect
- how and when did the concern come to light?
- when did the alleged abuse occur?
- where did the alleged abuse take place?
- what are the details of the alleged abuse?
- what impact is this having on the adult concerned?
- what is the adult concerned saying about the abuse?
- are there details of any witnesses?
- is there any potential risk to anyone visiting the adult concerned to find out what is happening?
- is a child (under 18 years) at risk?

Details of the person (or organisation) alleged to be causing the harm (if known):

- name, age, and gender
- what is their relationship to the adult concerned?
- are they the adult concerned main carer?
- are they living with the adult concerned?
- are they a member of staff, paid carer, or volunteer?
- what is their role?
- are they employed through a personal budget?
- which organisation are they employed by?
- are there other people at risk from the person causing the harm?

Any immediate actions that have been taken:

- were emergency services contacted? if so, which?
- what action was taken?
- what is the crime number if a report has been made to the police?

- what details of any immediate plans have been put in place to protect the adult concerned from further harm
- have children's services been informed if a child (under 18 years) is at risk? \*

\*Where there are concerns that a child may also be at risk a referral should also be made to Children's Social Care. See Healthwatch Wirral Safeguarding Children Policy.

A referral must be made even if it is known that Adult Social Care is already involved with the individual, as this may be new information.

The duty social worker should acknowledge a referral within one working day of receiving it. If the referrer has not received an acknowledgement within 3 working days, he/she should contact the manager in Adult Social Care.

The Adult Social Care manager is responsible for ensuring that the referrer and the individual are informed of the outcome of the referral, including where no further action is to be taken, and reasons supporting the decision. This will be done as soon as possible and, in all cases, within a maximum of 7 working days.

In the event that the referrer does not agree with the response and decisions about the referral by the Adult Social Care Team, the referring agency should discuss their concerns directly with the line manager of the social worker, in the first instance to seek resolution.

It may also be necessary, following a referral to adult social care, for the concern to be reported to the Police as a crime may have been committed, for example, someone is alleging that they have been sexually assaulted. This is in addition to the requirement to contact emergency services when there is immediate risk or urgent need for medical attention

*Where there is any suspicion of abuse and or neglect which relates to an adult living in a private, voluntary or local authority care home, (nursing or residential) or adult placement, or is supported by a domiciliary or nursing care agency, the Care Quality Commission must be informed, following the referral to adult social care.*

### **Prevent, reduce, delay**

*In cases where a safeguarding adult's referral is not appropriate, alternative sources of support which aim to prevent, reduce or delay the impact of their circumstances, should be discussed with the individual and, where appropriate, their consent gained to make referrals on their behalf. For example, for a Care Act or Carers assessment/review, to local voluntary and community organisations.*

## **Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SAR)**

*There may be circumstances in which attendance at a Safeguarding Adults Review is necessary. The safeguarding lead will in all cases attend these along with an appropriate representative of the service that has had involvement.*

## **Additional Procedures**

*Some safeguarding concerns can involve very complex and sensitive issues that require the organisation to follow additional procedures and ensure the involvement of safeguarding adult specialists.*

*Concerns regarding Domestic Abuse, Forced Marriage, Honour Based Abuse, Female Genital Mutation (FGM), Violent Extremism must be discussed with the Safeguarding Lead/deputy unless it is necessary to ensure the individuals immediate safety or to obtain urgent medical treatment-this must be arranged without delay.*

## **Domestic Abuse including Forced Marriage, Honour Based Abuse and FMG;**

*When dealing with concerns about Domestic Abuse including Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse, whilst it will be necessary to contact specialists as soon as possible, there may be occasions when practitioners will need to gather some information from the person to establish facts to support a referral. When doing so practitioners must.*

- *See the individual at risk immediately in a secure and private place where the conversation cannot be overheard*
- *See the individual on their own*
- *Explain all the options to them*
- *Recognise and respect their wishes*
- *Reassure them about confidentiality i.e. practitioners will not inform their family*
- *Establish a way of contacting them discreetly in the future*
- *Obtain full details to pass on to the trained specialist as appropriate*

### **Do Not:**

- *Send them away*
- *Approach members of their family or the community*
- *Attempt to be a mediator.*
- *Contact the perpetrator*

### **Additional Steps:**

- *If necessary, record any injuries*
- *Give them personal safety advice*
- *In the case of forced marriage advise them not to travel overseas.*

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- *Refer them, with their consent, to appropriate local and national support services that have a history of working with survivors of domestic abuse and forced marriage as appropriate*

*Victims of Domestic Abuse, Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse may be reluctant to consent to information sharing with other agencies due to fear of the possible repercussions. It is therefore vital to provide a careful explanation of the benefits of sharing information with agencies that can support them. Staff must also provide assurance that information will not be shared with the perpetrator/their family and inform them of what will happen once a referral is made to the appropriate agency.*

*Where an individual does not consent to sharing information with appropriate authorities, to protect them, it may be necessary to share information with authorities such as the police without their consent. Situations where practitioners must refer with or without consent include.*

- *There is a high risk of serious harm or homicide.*
- *There are children at risk.*
- *There are other dependant adults at risk.*
- *The individual has care and support needs that prevent them from safeguarding themselves.*
- *There are concerns that the individual does not have the capacity to make decisions about their own safety and the risk they are exposed to.*
- *There is evidence to suggest that the adult at risk has been unduly coerced / threatened into not seeking intervention.*

*In all the situations described above, a referral must be made to the Police.*

*Referrals to the Police can be made by calling 101 and ensuring that key words are used to describe the situation such as Domestic Abuse, Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse etc. This will ensure that the referral is passed to the appropriate specialist without delay.*

*Where there are children at risk, a referral must be made to Children's Social Care in addition to the Police, in line with local procedures- see Healthwatch Wirral's Safeguarding Children Policy.*

*Where the individual themselves has care and support needs that prevent them from safeguarding themselves or there are other dependant adults at risk, a referral must be made to Adult Social Care in addition to the Police following the procedures set out in this policy.*

*If the individual does not consent to sharing information with appropriate authorities, they must be told if there is to be disclosure of confidential information, explaining why you have acted against their wishes.*

*Where an individual has the capacity to make their own decisions about their own safety and risk, they are exposed to does not consent to sharing information with other agencies, this must be respected unless one of the factors above applies. Practitioners ought to provide information about local and national support services that have a history of working with survivors of domestic abuse and forced marriage as appropriate and offer a supported referral.*

(see additional documents with details of national agencies that provide support to victims of Domestic Abuse including Forced Marriage, Honour Based Abuse and DOH Safeguarding FGM Pathway)

**Adults who may be vulnerable to Radicalisation;** If you are concerned that an individual is actively involved in terrorism or extremism and/or you have reason to believe that there is an imminent threat to others, then these concerns must be referred to the Police without delay. To ensure your own safety, you must not inform the individual that you are contacting the Police.

If you are concerned that an individual/group may be vulnerable to recruitment by terrorists/extremist this must be referred to a local Channel Coordinator. Channel is the multi-agency safeguarding process which is now in place across the country to ensure a consistent approach to protect individuals or groups who may be vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists. Channel provides a mechanism for supporting those who may be vulnerable to violent extremism by assessing the nature and the extent of the potential risk and, where necessary, providing an appropriate support package tailored to individual need.

As involvement in the Channel Programme is currently voluntary, it is advised to gain an individual's consent before sharing information with them. If the individual concerned does not provide consent you must discuss this with the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy who will consider whether it is in the public interest to share information without the individual's consent.

**Merseyside Police have a dedicated Prevent team who can be contacted for advice: 0151 777 8506.**

**You can also call the national police Prevent advice line 0800 011 3764, in confidence, to share your concerns with our specially trained officers.**

**If it's an emergency, please call 999.**



Following discussion with the Channel Co-ordinators you may be asked to provide details of your concerns in an email.

Where there are concerns that an individual is vulnerable to recruitment by terrorists/extremist and has *care and support needs that prevent them from safeguarding themselves*, a referral must also be made to Adult Social Care.

## Recording

If you have any concerns about an adult, once you have discussed your concerns, you must record information **within 24 hours**.

**Within 48 hours**, if you make a referral to Adult Social Care, a crime is reported to the Police or the concern is reported to CQC (regardless of the outcome/response)- you must record this information.

Safeguarding records & attachments will be kept for six years from the date of referral. The database will be cleansed annually.

## Safe Recruitment

All organisations which employ staff and/or volunteers to work with or provide services for adults have a duty to safeguard and promote the individual's welfare. This includes ensuring that safe recruitment and selection procedures are adopted which deter, reject, or identify unsuitable people

It is the responsibility of each organisation to consult with their human resources adviser, develop and review their own procedure and ensure that their practice satisfies the requirements of employment law.

Making safeguarding and promoting the welfare of adults an integral factor in human resources management is an essential part of creating safe environments. Safer practice in recruitment means thinking about and including issues to do with adult safeguarding at every stage of the process.

Those involved in recruiting and selecting staff must successfully test the candidates' ability and experience against a clearly defined person specification.

## APPENDICES

## **CATEGORIES OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

The Care and Support Statutory Guidance identifies types of abuse but also emphasises that this should not limit the view of what constitutes abuse or neglect. The specific circumstances of an individual case should always be considered. All three factors need to be satisfied for a safeguarding enquiry to be addressed in accordance with Section 42 of the Care Act.

**Physical abuse** – including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, scalding, inappropriate sanctions, restraint, or domestic abuse.

**Sexual abuse** – including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or could not consent or was pressured into consenting.

**Emotional/Psychological abuse** – including threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

**Financial or material** – including theft, fraud, internet scamming, exploitation, pressure in connection with Wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions, or benefits.

**Neglect/Acts of omission** – ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition, and heating.

**Discriminatory abuse** - Discriminatory abuse is where people are inappropriately treated because of their race, disability, gender, age, or sexual orientation. Signs include being withdrawn and fearful because of verbal or physical harassment, or from being shunned or denied cultural needs.

### **Organisational Abuse (previously known as Institutional Abuse)**

Organisational Abuse includes neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or Care home or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment.

It may be a result of regimes, routines, practices and behaviours that occur in services that adults live in or use, and which violate their human rights. This may be part of the culture of a service to which staff are accustomed and may pass by unremarked upon. They may be

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subtle, small, and apparently insignificant, yet together may amount to a service culture that denies, restricts or curtails the dignity, privacy, choice, independence or fulfilment of individuals.

**Self-Neglect** - This covers a wide range of behaviours including neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. Safeguarding partnerships can be a positive means of addressing issues of self-neglect. The Safeguarding Adults Boards in the authority you work in will have self-neglect guidance on their websites which you should refer to when identifying concerns of this nature. A multi-agency group is the appropriate forum where strategic discussions can take place on dealing with what are often complex and challenging situations for practitioners and managers as well as communities more broadly.

In addition to the main categories of abuse, there are further areas of concern that may be relevant to individual's circumstances and present a risk of harm:

**Hate Crime.** A hate crime is described as “any hate incident which constitutes a criminal offence, perceived by the victim or any other person, as being motivated by prejudice or hate”. In some circumstances, verbal abuse, harassment and threats or intimidation may meet the threshold of criminal offence.

**Bullying /Harassment.** This includes discrimination, racist or sexist behaviour or harassment and bullying based on a person's age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, race and sexual orientation. Additionally, anti-social behaviour, defined as “neighbour nuisance or behaviour which unreasonably interferes with the peaceful enjoyment of the home, street or surrounding area”, may represent a form of bullying or harassment. A focus on individual or family vulnerability, regardless of eligibility or presenting need for specific care services, is necessary to ensure appropriate access to safeguarding interventions.

**Domestic Abuse** With effect from March 2013, the official Government definition of domestic violence and abuse is: *“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:*

- *Psychological.*
- *Physical.*
- *Sexual.*
- *Financial.*

- *Emotional.*

*Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.*

*Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.”*

This definition includes honour-based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

The majority of domestic abuse is committed by men towards women. It can also involve men being abused by their female partners, abuse in same sex relationships, and by young people towards other family members, as well as the abuse of older people in families. Domestic abuse occurs irrespective of social class, racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, or sexual relationships or identity.

**Forced Marriage,** Forced marriage is a term used to describe a marriage in which one or both of the parties are married without their consent or against their will. A forced marriage differs from an arranged marriage, in which both parties consent to the assistance of their parents or a third party in identifying a spouse. The United Nations view of forced marriage is that it represents a form of human rights abuse, since it violates the principle of the freedom and autonomy of individuals. From 16<sup>th</sup> June 2014 forced marriage became a criminal offence.

**Female Genital Mutilation** **Female genital mutilation** (FGM) is a collective term for procedures which include the removal of part or all of the external female genitalia for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. The procedure is typically performed on girls aged between 4 and 13, but in some cases, it is performed on young women before marriage or pregnancy.

FGM has been a criminal offence in the U.K. since the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 was passed. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 replaced the 1985 Act and makes it an offence for the first time for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to carry out FGM abroad, or to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad, even in countries where the practice is legal. The rights of women and girls are enshrined by various universal and regional instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on Human

and Peoples' Rights and Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of women in Africa. All these documents highlight the right for girls and women to live free from gender discrimination, free from torture, to live in dignity and with bodily integrity. It is increasingly found in Western Europe and other developed countries primarily among immigrant and refugee communities. The Serious Crime Act 2015 has amended the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003

**Honour Based Abuse.** *The terms honour crime, honour-based abuse or izzat embrace a variety of crimes of violence (mainly but not exclusively against women), including assault, imprisonment, and murder, where the person is being punished by their family or their community.*

*They are being punished for actually, or allegedly, undermining what the family or community believes to be the correct code of behaviour. In transgressing this correct code of behaviour, the person shows that they have not been properly controlled to conform by their family and this is to the "shame" or "dishonour" of the family.*

*Welchman and Hossain state "The term crimes of honour encompasses a variety of manifestations of violence against women; including murder termed "honour killings", assault, confinement or imprisonment and interference with choice in marriage where the publicly articulated justification is attributed to a social order claimed to require the preservation of a concept of honour vested in male family and or conjugal control over women and specifically women's sexual conduct – actual, suspected or potential."*

**Modern Slavery** *encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they must coerce, deceive, and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.*

*Human trafficking is the movement of a person from one place to another, using methods of deception, coercion, the abuse of power or of someone's vulnerability and for the purposes of exploitation. It is possible to be a victim of trafficking even if their consent has been given to being moved. Human trafficking may occur across international borders or take place within one country.*

*According to the National Crime agency, there are three main elements:*

- 1. The movement: recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people.*
- 2. The control: threat, use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or the giving of payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim.*
- 3. The purpose: exploitation of a person, which includes prostitution and other sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery or similar practices, and the removal of organs.*

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**Adults who may be vulnerable to Terrorism or Extremism.** Some individuals may be susceptible to exploitation into violent extremism by radicalisers. Violent extremists often use a persuasive rationale and charismatic individuals to attract people to their cause. The aim is to attract people to their reasoning, inspire new recruits and embed their extreme views and persuade vulnerable individuals of the legitimacy of their cause. There are several factors that may make the individual susceptible to exploitation by violent extremists, such as identity or personal crisis, particular personal circumstances, unemployment or underemployment and criminality. None of these factors should be considered in isolation but in conjunction with the circumstances of the individual.

## **DOMESTIC ABUSE – LOCAL AND NATIONAL CONTACTS**

Local support services will be able to provide advice and information regarding a range of Domestic Abuse Concerns such as psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse, honour-based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

### **National Helplines**

- **In an emergency always telephone 999**
- **If you need help to deal with domestic abuse or violence you can contact the Family Safety Unit on 0151 666 4914, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm**
- **National 24-Hour Domestic Abuse helpline - call free on 0808 2000 247 [National Domestic Violence Helpline website](#)**
- **For signposting and information on how to get support for yourself or a loved one in Wirral visit [itsneverokwirral.org](http://itsneverokwirral.org).**
- **[Abusive Relationship support and guidance](#)**

### **National Helplines specific to Forced Marriage/Honour Based Abuse**

Karma Nivarna- 0800 5999247 <http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk/>

Forced Marriage Unit (for general advice/support) - 020 7008 0151

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage#forced-marriage-unit>

### **Other ways you can get help**

#### **Local Services**

- **[Tomorrow's Women Wirral](#) - Telephone: 0151 647 7907**  
**Provides a supportive woman only environment to help women make positive changes at a pace that is right for them. This includes courses, counselling, mentoring and legal support for women who have experienced domestic abuse.**

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- [Involve Northwest](#)- Lighthouse Centre- Telephone: 0151 644 1100  
Friendly space for women and children who have or are experiencing domestic abuse. Drop-in service Monday to Friday between 9am and 4pm offering independent advocacy, risk assessment and safety planning. Specialist workshops and programmes running throughout the week to support women and children to help them navigate towards a safe and positive future.
- [Wirral Women and Children's Aid](#) - Telephone: 0151 643 9766  
Refuge for women and their children who need a place of safety, with support to find permanent accommodation, training and employment. Groups are run for women to build self-confidence, self-esteem and self-belief and understand the impact that domestic abuse has had on them and their children.
- [WEB Merseyside](#) - Telephone: 0151 653 3771  
WEB provides one to one listening support, confidence building and personal development workshops, holistic therapies, counselling sessions, therapeutic art classes and group activities.
- [Wirral Children's Centres](#)  
There are children's centres across the borough which provide activities and support for children under 5 years old and their parents and carers. This includes the 12 week 'Freedom Programme' which supports women who have been in an abusive relationship.
- [RASA Merseyside](#)
- For anyone who has been sexually abused or raped, or who has been affected by sexual violence at any time in their lives. Telephone: 0151 666 1392, email: [helpline@rasamerseyside.org](mailto:helpline@rasamerseyside.org)
- [Paul Lavelle Foundation](#) - domestic abuse towards men.

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