

Keeping adults safe from abuse is everyone's business

For more copies of this leaflet, or if you would like the leaflet in a different language or format, call 020 7974 4000.

Camden Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board

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To help someone
who is being
harmed call
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Introduction

This leaflet is about adult abuse and what you can do if you are worried that you, or someone you know, may be at risk of harm.

We all have the right to live in a safe environment where we are not abused or neglected. Organisations in Camden 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 treating you or someone else in a way that denies human rights. It happens when someone has power over you and you do not agree to what they are doing to you.

Abuse can range from someone shouting at you in a way that undermines your confidence and frightens you, to causing you physical pain, suffering and even death. Abuse can happen just once or many times. It can be done on purpose or by someone who may not realise they are doing it.

There are different types of abuse:

Physical

Hitting, smacking, pushing, shaking, spitting, misusing medication or restraint, or other ways of hurting you.

Sexual

Any sexual activity you cannot or do not agree to.

Financial or material

Taking your money or property or using it without your permission, including theft and fraud.

Emotional or psychological

Threatening, bullying or forcing you to do something, shouting or swearing at or ignoring you, or saying things to hurt your feelings such as name-calling.

It may include using insulting language about your age, ethnicity, culture, sexuality, gender or disability. This is called 'discriminatory abuse'.

Neglect

Where you suffer because the person who is supposed to look after you does not do this: for example they don't give you food, medication, heating or personal care.

Institutional

Repeated poor care of an adult at risk through neglect or poor professional practice in a paid or regulated care setting, such as a hospital or a care home.

Who do we mean when we say 'adult at risk of abuse'?

If you are an adult at risk of abuse, that means you are someone aged 18 or over and you are or may be unable to take care of yourself or stop someone else from harming you. This means you may be more at risk from someone abusing or seriously exploiting you.

There is a range of reasons why people may be unable to protect themselves, including age-related frailty, a visual or hearing impairment, physical disability or ill-health, learning disability, mental health problems, substance misuse or because they are providing care for someone else.

The harm may happen anywhere – at home, in a public place, in a hospital or at a day centre.

Which people might abuse an adult at risk?

Anyone can behave in a way that is abusive. A stranger may be the abuser, but an abuser is more likely to be someone you know, such as:

- family members
- professional staff
- paid or voluntary workers
- other adults at risk of abuse
- friends
- young people
- carers.

What are the signs of abuse?

If someone is at risk of, or is being abused, you might see one or a combination of the following signs:

- multiple bruising or fingermarks
- injuries they cannot give a realistic explanation for
- worsening health or weight loss for no obvious reason
- inappropriate, dirty or inadequate clothing
- mood changes or they become withdrawn
- a carer who is unwilling to let others have contact with the person they care for
- shortage of money for no apparent reason
- neediness – someone being clingy and wanting affection
- tearfulness and crying for no obvious reason and not saying why.

What should I do if I think someone is being abused?

If you think you or a person you know may be at risk from harm or serious exploitation or both, tell someone you trust. Do this as soon as you can. You could tell:

- your family
- a friend
- the police
- a social worker
- a nurse
- a doctor
- staff who support you.

The person you tell will help you to make a safeguarding alert by doing one of the following:

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

Contacting the access and support team

Housing and adult social care

Camden Council

Phone: 020 7974 4000

Textphone: 020 7974 6866

Contacting the Camden Police Community Safety Unit

Phone: 101 to report new safeguarding concerns.

Phone: 020 8733 6594 to follow up on concerns that have already been reported.

Email: csu.camden@met.police.uk

Contacting an inspector at the Care Quality Commission

Phone: 03000 616161 for suspected abuse in care homes or hospitals.

Email: enquiries@cqc.org.uk

Do not be afraid to contact us. An adult who cannot care for themselves may not be able to raise the alarm so it is important that you do – and make the abuse stop.

You can also visit [camden.gov.uk/asg](https://www.camden.gov.uk/asg) for more information on how to protect adults at risk of abuse and for information on what Camden Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board is doing to protect them. If you are concerned about someone who does not live in Camden, contact the local council or the police where they live.

What not to do

Doing nothing is not an option. Don't ignore what is going on. Do not destroy, clean or wipe any evidence that might be used in an investigation.

What will happen if I report abuse?

If you report abuse:

- you 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
- first, trained staff will contact the person being abused. We will work together with the adult at risk carefully and sensitively to investigate the allegations of abuse and decide how to deal with the situation
- information and advice will be made available so the adult at risk can choose what action is taken and what help they want to have. We will work with them to put a plan in place to protect them, and we will provide help and advice to stop the abuse from happening again
- 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
- where the abuse is thought to be a crime, the police may take legal action against the abuser.

Did you know?

Did you know it is a criminal offence to abuse an adult at risk who lacks capacity?

In 2005 the Mental Capacity Act was introduced and made it a criminal offence for anybody to ill-treat or wilfully neglect a person who lacks capacity to make relevant decisions. If a person is found guilty of such an offence under the Act, they could be sent to prison for up to five years, or receive a fine, or both.