

## Patient information

# Safeguarding Adults

## *What to do if you suspect a vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected*

Most people have heard about child abuse and are aware that social care services have a key role in safeguarding children from abuse, but may not be aware that there is similar protection for vulnerable adults.

Social Services (Adult Social Care) will investigate referrals made on adult safeguarding and the West Suffolk Hospital plays a key role in keeping adults safe by identifying and reporting concerns relating to possible abuse.

### **Who is a vulnerable adult?**

A vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 years or over who has, or may need, someone to assist in caring for them because of mental or physical disability, age or illness and is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation.

### **What is abuse?**

Abuse can occur anywhere, at home, at work, at college, in care homes, hospitals, public places or in the community. There are many forms of abuse which include:

- physical abuse – hitting, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint
- sexual abuse – rape and sexual assault
- psychological abuse – emotional abuse, threats of harm, verbal abuse, isolation
- financial abuse, misuse or misappropriation of possessions, benefits fraud
- neglect – ignoring physical or medical needs, withholding food and drink/heating

## **Our responsibility in safeguarding adults**

As professionals we have a duty of care to all patients entering our hospital and they can expect us to promote their health and welfare whilst keeping them in a safe environment, with protection from harm.

If we have concerns about the possible abuse of a vulnerable adult, we will make a referral to the appropriate social care team who will investigate the “cause of concern”.

We have a duty to share information, in accordance with procedures, with other agencies involved in the investigation of concerns, including the police if needed.

The medical and nursing staff will discuss the concerns with the patient’s close family unless they feel it is in the patient’s best interests not to. The social worker will inform you about the safeguarding process and any decisions that are reached about the safety of the person referred.

We always try to work in partnership with families, carers and others involved in the person’s care, to offer sensitivity, support and help at this time.

If you have any concerns about the care of your family member/friend whilst in hospital please talk to the nurse in charge of the ward or the medical staff. If this is not possible or you would prefer to speak to someone who is independent, contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS):

**Telephone:** 01284 712555 (24 hour answerphone service).

**In-patients:** Ask your nurse to bleep us (bleep number 398).

**By e-mail:** [pals@wsh.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@wsh.nhs.uk)

The PALS office is located in the main reception area of the West Suffolk Hospital. It is open Monday to Friday 9.00 am – 5.00 pm.

## **How might you become aware of abuse**

- You may see or hear something happen.
- A vulnerable adult may tell you about apparent abuse.
- A friend, family member or somebody else may tell you something that causes you concern.
- You might notice injuries or physical signs that cause you concern.

- You may notice either the victim or abuser behaving in a way that alerts you that something may be wrong.

## **If you have a cause for concern please report it**

For more information on safeguarding adults please view the Suffolk County Council webpage: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/protecting-people-at-risk-of-abuse>

*If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)*  
<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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