

## Early warning signs for safeguarding: Learning briefing



Abuse/neglect can happen once or multiple times. It can be caused by anyone, someone known to the adult with care and support needs, such as a family member or friend, another adult with support needs, a professional, or a stranger. It can happen anywhere, including a person's own home, a care home, health setting or in a public place.

### What is an early warning sign?

Early warning signs are the first signs and symptoms that suggest something isn't right. Early signs of abuse/neglect can vary depending on the type of abuse/neglect.

Early warning signs may only occur at a low level, so a small change. Whether you are a family member, friend, professional or member of the public, it is important to notice these early warning signs and if the adult has care and support needs, report your concerns to West Sussex County Council (WSCC). Your early reporting could help reduce the risk of abuse/neglect continuing or worsening.

### What is Making Safeguarding Personal?

If possible, you should speak with the adult before reporting a concern to WSCC, unless this could put you or the adult at increased risk. Involving the adult is also known as Making Safeguarding Personal, this means working with the adult to know of what they want to happen to support them to be safe.

### What are the types of abuse?

**Physical abuse:** hitting, kicking, burning, giving you the wrong medication, or medication you don't need.

**Neglect:** not getting the help, food, or healthcare you need.

**Self-neglect:** not looking after your own needs, or not wanting help offered to you.

**Financial abuse:** stealing money or possessions, not letting you have money, or telling you what to spend it on.

**Domestic abuse:** any form of abuse from anyone that you live with, including ex-partners.

**Sexual abuse:** unwanted sexual contact such as touching or kissing, taking, or sending sexual pictures.

**Psychological/emotional abuse:** shouting, threats, cyber bullying.

**Discrimination:** threats, insults, harassment, or abuse based on disability, age, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexuality.

**Modern slavery:** working without being paid or not being paid enough.

**Organisational abuse:** poor care, neglect, poor practice.

## What are some of the early warning signs of abuse/neglect?

- Change in mood e.g., appearing depressed, more withdrawn, or angry, having low self-esteem and feeling insecure.
- Development or increase in anxiety or stress e.g., more calls to services or family about issues previously not of concern, appearing more tearful.
- Change in routine e.g., going out more or less, missing work or other events/responsibilities.
- Change in finances e.g., having more or less money or usual personal and or household items, missing possessions.
- Change in appearance e.g., wearing different clothes and make-up, appearing not to have showered/clean clothes.
- Changes in health e.g., losing or gaining weight, changes in sleep pattern, new anxiety-related health issues like stomach pain or headaches, unexplained incontinence.
- Visits by unknown people e.g., frequent visits from trades people, unknown groups of people visiting at day or in the night.
- Concerning change in home environment e.g., increase in clutter and/or unclean, damage or destroying of property/possessions.
- Refusal to have a contact with a friend, family member, neighbour or carer/professional known to the person.

## How to report a safeguarding concern

If you have concerns, you can check the [Safeguarding Thresholds](#) guidance for advice. If you do need to report a concern the best way to report this is to make a safeguarding referral using [the online form](#).

Members of the public can also phone 01243 642121.

Professionals can call the Safeguarding Hub on 03302 228400.

## Further information on safeguarding

If you are interested in learning more about safeguarding, and for access to posters and leaflets, please visit our website: [www.westsussexsab.org.uk](http://www.westsussexsab.org.uk)