



## Why is this document important?

Pharmacists have a professional, social and moral duty to protect vulnerable adults from abuse or neglect and to work with other organisations and authorities to safeguard vulnerable adults. The vulnerable adult's wishes should be taken into account at all times as a key issue is patient consent.

## What this guidance will tell you

The purpose of this resource is to provide concise practical information to help pharmacists protect vulnerable adults in the course of their professional practice.

It provides information in the following areas:

- Recognising signs of abuse or neglect
- What to do if abuse or neglect is suspected
- Sources of further information and advice

## What this document does not cover

This is not intended to be a detailed comprehensive guidance.

It does not include statistical data.

Vulnerable adults are persons who are over the age of 18 and are at a greater risk of abuse or neglect. They may fall into one of the following groups:

- Suffers from mental or physical disability
- Has learning difficulties
- Is frail or elderly
- Is in an abusive relationship
- Is a substance misuser

Be aware that any of our patients, including those who do not fall within the groups above, could be a vulnerable adult.

## Possible signs of abuse or neglect

There are various types of abuse or neglect and the following lists may be helpful but are not exhaustive. The presence of one or more of these signs may not necessarily be caused by abuse or neglect.

### Physical abuse

- Injuries which are unusual or unexplained
- Bite marks, scalds, fingertip bruising, fractures
- Repeated injury

### Neglect

- Failure to thrive – evidence of malnourishment
- Poor hygiene, dirty and unkempt

### Emotional abuse

- Evidence of self-harm/self-mutilation
- Inappropriate verbal abuse
- Fear of certain people

## Sexual abuse and rape

- Indication of sexually transmitted disease
- Repeated requests for Emergency Hormonal Contraception

## Financial abuse

- Sudden changes to their finances, eg, getting into debt
- Inappropriate, exploitive or excessive control over the finances of the vulnerable adult

## Additional perpetrator signs

- Delays seeking medical treatment or advice and/or reluctant to allow treatment of the vulnerable adult
- Detachment from the vulnerable adult
- Lacks concern at the severity or extent of injury or other signs
- Is reluctant to give information
- Aggressive towards the vulnerable adult

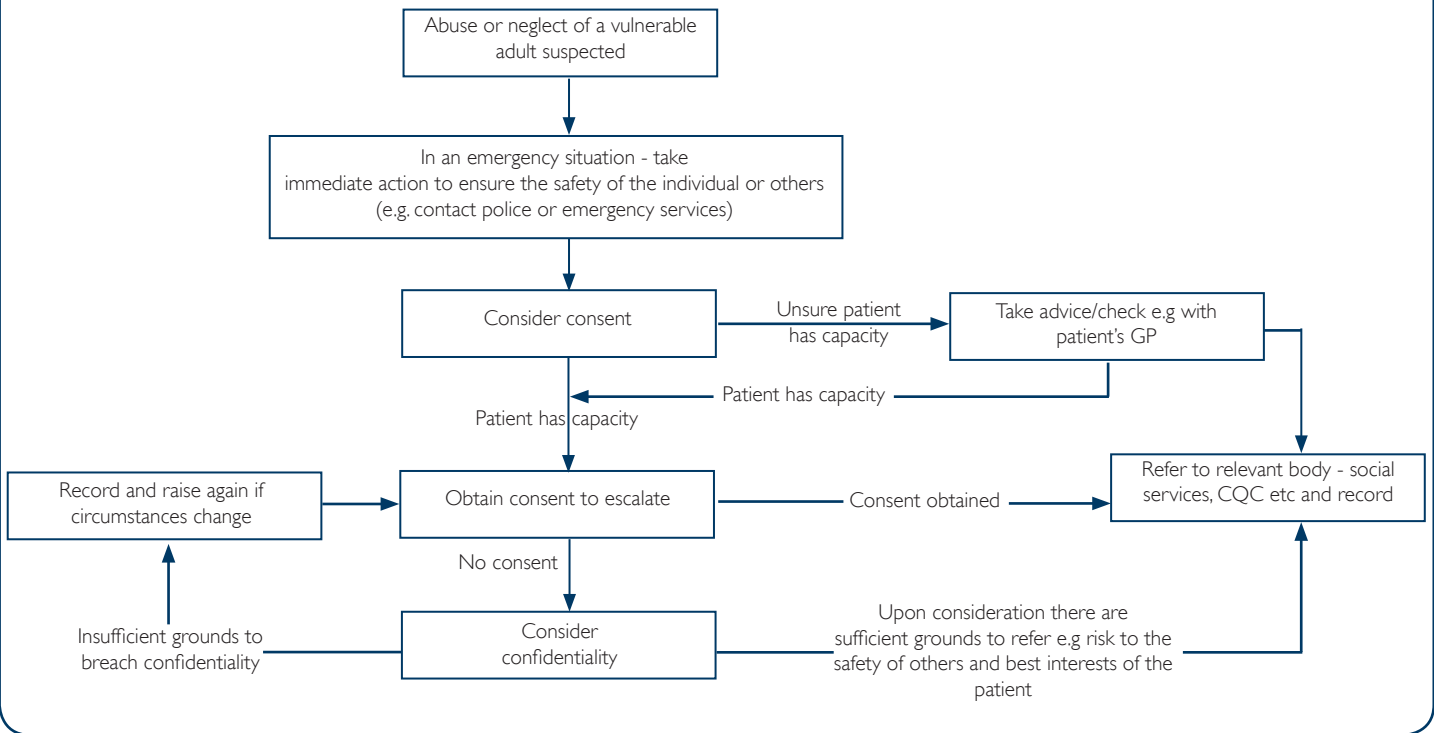
## What to do if abuse or neglect is suspected

Local procedures may be available from your employer, the NHS trust, Health Board or local council, and you should follow these procedures where available. The outline process overleaf may also be useful.

A vulnerable adult's wishes should be taken into account at all times. Obtain consent from the patient before disclosing confidential information about them. However if there are overriding circumstances requiring you to take immediate action to ensure the safety of the individual or others the need for referral, even if they do not give consent, should be considered. If you are unsure of someone's mental capacity to provide consent seek additional advice, eg, from their GP.

You should not attempt to investigate suspicions or allegations of abuse directly or to discuss concerns with the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect.

## Outline of process on what to do if abuse or neglect is suspected



### Sources of advice

- Local NHS trust, Primary Care Organisation, Health Board, and Social Services
- Vulnerable adult's general practitioner
- Peers or senior colleagues

### Referring to Social Services

Local Social Services. Name(s) and number:

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### Record keeping

Make appropriate records of concerns and suspicions, decisions taken and reasons whether or not further action was taken on a particular occasion.

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### Further sources of information

RPS Support: 0845 257 2570

Email [support@rpharms.com](mailto:support@rpharms.com) or complete an online web form at [www.rpharms.com](http://www.rpharms.com)

- No Secrets: Guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse. Department of Health London: Department of Health; 2000. Available at [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_4008486](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4008486)
- In Safe Hands: implementing adult protection procedures in Wales. Welsh Government 2000. Available at [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)
- Care Quality Commission (CQC) England <http://www.cqc.org.uk/usingcareservices/adviceaboutdifferenttypesofcare/socialcare/reportabuseandneglect.cfm#3>
- Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) <http://wales.gov.uk/cssiwsite/newcssiw/?lang=en>
- Care Inspectorate (SCSWIS) [Scotland] [http://www.scswis.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=7885&Itemid=694](http://www.scswis.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7885&Itemid=694)
- Welsh Government information <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/socialcare/vulnerableadults/?lang=en>
- Scottish Government information <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/children-families/pvglegislation>
- Vetting and Barring Scheme Home Office information [England and Wales] <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/vetting-barring-scheme/>