



HM Government

# SAFEGUARDING IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

No child or adult should be made to feel unsafe. Everyone has a right to be safe from harm and abuse. All of us have a role to play in safeguarding, never more so than during COVID-19.

## **You have a major role to play in protecting children and adults at risk of harm and abuse – now more than ever.**

Right now, vulnerable children and adults may be particularly isolated, meaning that the family, community and professional networks they usually rely on may be unavailable or hard to access. At the same time, living under the current arrangements may increase the pressures that can contribute to abuse and neglect, or allow it to go unseen. Neighbours, volunteers and professionals – like pharmacists, shop and supermarket workers – can play a vital role in keeping adults and children safe.

When supporting others during the COVID-19 outbreak, you may well come into contact with children and adults who are at risk of harm or abuse. In these situations, recognising the potential signs of harm or abuse, and knowing what to do if you have a concern, can make a real difference. You should not ignore your concerns or assume that someone else will report the abuse.

### **What kind of signs to look out for**

Abuse and neglect could fall under a number of categories, including domestic, physical, psychological and/or emotional, economic, or sexual.

Although not an exhaustive list, some signs to look for in contact with individuals at risk of harm or abuse include:

- unusual injuries, including bruises, burns, fractures, bite marks or signs of self-harm
- consistently poor hygiene, poor living conditions or inappropriate clothing
- communicating aggressively or using sexual language
- appearing withdrawn, guarded, anxious or frightened, particularly around certain individuals
- hearing or seeing shouting, violence or intimidation
- adults keeping children, or adults in need of support, from view, and
- unsupervised children visiting a house where only adults live.

Further material on the signs to spot to protect children can be found at <https://tacklechildabuse.campaign.gov.uk>

For more information on signs of abuse that can affect adults, please see the Social Care Institute for Excellence guidance on safeguarding adults during the pandemic: <https://www.scie.org.uk/care-providers/coronavirus-covid-19/safeguarding-adults>

## **What to do if you have a concern**

If you suspect a crime is being or has been committed, or a vulnerable person is in immediate danger, call 999 immediately and ask for the police. If you are unable to call because of hearing or speech impairments, use the emergency text service: [www.emergencysms.net](http://www.emergencysms.net)

Even if you are not sure, but are worried that someone may be at risk of harm or abuse, you should speak to your manager or the safeguarding lead in your organisation, if it has one. Charities can find further help and guidance on handling concerns at <https://safeguarding.culture.gov.uk>

You can also contact the relevant social care team at your local council, or through other local referral routes if known. Find the contact details to report a concern about a child or adult to your local council here: [www.myguideapps.com/projects/safeguarding/default/](http://www.myguideapps.com/projects/safeguarding/default/)

Alternatively, the NSPCC Helpline is available for anyone who would like to talk through a safeguarding concern about a child. It can be contacted online via [www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline) or on 0800 800 5000.

If you are concerned that someone is at risk of domestic abuse, find more information and support services here: [www.gov.uk/domestic-abuse](http://www.gov.uk/domestic-abuse)

If you suspect someone may be a victim of modern slavery, contact the Salvation Army's confidential 24/7 referral helpline on 0800 808 3733 or visit: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-modern-slavery/](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-modern-slavery/)

