



PRACTICE GUIDANCE - SAFEGUARDING ADULTS DURING COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Safeguarding Adult Boards of Northumberland, Gateshead, North Tyneside, Sunderland,
Newcastle and South Tyneside

Created on 02/04/2020

➤ Who is this guidance for?

All organisations involved in safeguarding adults throughout the Northumberland, Gateshead, North Tyneside, Sunderland, Newcastle and South Tyneside area.

➤ Purpose of guidance

This guidance provides a short summary of statutory safeguarding adult provision throughout the Northumbria sub-region during the Covid-19 outbreak. It is recognised that there may be some local variations in arrangements for the delivery of these provisions.

All of our Safeguarding Adult Boards remain committed to safeguarding adults with care and support needs who are experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect. There is a need for all organisations to work together to assist with an anticipated reduction in capacity of our front-line services. Individuals, families and communities are all experiencing unprecedented levels of anxiety, stress and isolation which could lead to increased tensions within homes, care settings and communities. In particular, there is a need to be aware of and respond to a potential increases in risks related to domestic and financial abuse and scams in the current climate. There is also a need to prepare to support isolated individuals and potentially increased risk.

The key message to all partners is that **safeguarding adult's duties continue to apply** and as far as possible it is business as normal. This position may change as the Covid-19 situation progresses and updated guidance will be provided as appropriate.

➤ Safeguarding Adults Statutory duties and guidance

The Coronavirus Act (2020) provides for changes to legislation to enable public services to provide an effective response to the global pandemic Covid-19. Changes would be temporary, lasting only for the duration of the emergency, and can be triggered or relaxed at the discretion of the UK Government and Local Authorities. Whilst the Act could temporarily introduce a significant number of changes to the Care Act 2014, it does **not provide for any modifications to the adult safeguarding protections in Section 42, 43 and 44 of the Care Act (2014)**.

The Coronavirus Act does introduce greater flexibilities for health and social care. Practitioners in health and social care must familiarise themselves with the detailed regulations set out in the [Government guidance](#).

The [Ethical Framework for Adult Social Care](#) provides support to ongoing response planning and decision-making to ensure that ample consideration is given to a core set of ethical values and principles when organising and delivering social care for adults, including for safeguarding.

It should be noted that the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) have not been affected; these continue to be applied in full. However the government are producing emergency guidance to help manage DoLS during the crisis. This will clarify when a DoLS authorisation is necessary, and the basis on which an assessment can be made, including remote methods.

➤ Common Principles

There are a number of common principles that all organisations are asked to follow to assist with reducing demand upon our critical front-line services.

1. Safeguarding Adults Concern

- ✓ Before raising a Safeguarding Concern, all agencies to **check whether or not the statutory criteria for Safeguarding Adults is met**
- ✓ Please ensure that the **Safeguarding Adults Concern contains as much information as possible** prior to submission.
- ✓ Practitioners need to **consider whether Covid-19 factors increase or change the risk to the individual or others**.
- ✓ Acknowledge that **low risk concerns will potentially receive delayed responses**, outside of locally agreed timescales.

2. Section 42 Enquiries

- ✓ At the current time **Section 42 Enquiries should continue to be undertaken** in accordance with local multi-agency procedures, as there has been no change to Safeguarding Adults duties as set out in the Care Act.

- ✓ In accordance with the Care Act easements guidance, Local Authorities continue to offer the same level of safeguarding oversight and application of Section 42. However, safeguarding teams will be proportionate in their response and mindful of the pressure all agencies are likely to be under.
- ✓ Inevitably **high risk Section 42 Enquiries will be prioritised**.
- ✓ Due to the impact on resources (including staffing/services) it is acknowledged **that in some cases it will not be possible to fully remove risk**. This will be avoided wherever possible. These decisions and rationale will be clearly documented and revisited (if necessary) at the end of the Covid-19 situation
- ✓ All organisations must abide by the UK Government guidelines on **social distancing** wherever possible. This has necessitated new and evolving safeguarding practice, including home working for the majority of our front-line practitioners and **the use of technology to facilitate multi-agency discussions and engagement with the adult at risk**.
- ✓ There will be a clear **prioritisation of Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP)**. Engaging with the Adult at Risk may be more challenging during the outbreak but that does not mean it should not happen. Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board have developed some principles of engagement [here](#) which may help.
- ✓ Organisations need to consider the **least intrusive response** to the presenting risk(s). This includes limiting contact between agencies, and with the adult at risk, wherever possible. Where face to face contact is unavoidable, an assessment of potential symptoms should be undertaken and personal protective equipment should be sourced for practitioners where necessary. Any face to face contact deemed essential should be considered on a case to case basis, and in accordance with local guidance and equipment.
- ✓ It is acknowledged that the **volume and nature of Safeguarding enquires may change**, and there may be reduced resources and services to mitigate risks. This will be monitored and responded to locally. Any changes required to local policy and processes should be agreed with the key professionals including Safeguarding Leads and Principle Social Worker.

3. Section 43 Safeguarding Adult Boards (SABs)

- ✓ Given the demands on staff and critical services, it is acknowledged that **most SAB Business may need to be suspended or reduced**. However, the SAB is likely to want to seek assurance that statutory duties continue to be met, discuss business continuity, assist with co-ordination and communication, and address any new or emerging risks linked to Covid-19.
- ✓ All partner agencies must continue work to prevent and reduce the risk of harm to people with care and support needs, including those affected by Covid-19, and it is the role of the SAB to oversee this.
- ✓ SABs should **continue to communicate preventative messages** to public/staff, and ensure safeguarding adults issues are identified and appropriately referred. SABs

should also ensure that staff, including volunteers, are trained in recognising the signs and symptoms and abuse or neglect, how to respond, and where to go for advice and assistance.

4. Section 44 Safeguarding Adult Reviews

- ✓ **Section 44 Safeguarding Adult Review referrals should continue to be identified and referred**, although there is an acknowledgement that there may be a delay in the referrals being assessed and considered by the relevant panel or sub-group.
- ✓ SABs are recommended to consider any ongoing or new referrals for a Section 44 Safeguarding Adult Reviews on a **case-by-case basis** to determine what work should be suspended and what work might need to continue or commence.
- ✓ **Any delays or suspension should be communicated with families who are involved in the Safeguarding Adult Review process.**