

All adults safe from harm

Safeguarding is your **right**

Plain English guide



Safeguarding Ireland

E: info@safeguardingireland.org

W: www.safeguardingireland.org

/ What is adult safeguarding?

Adult safeguarding means ensuring all adults live safe from harm or any form of abuse.

This is one of the rights set out in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Ireland has signed up to this Declaration.

We believe everyone has the right to:

- Live safe from harm
- Be treated with respect and dignity
- Keep their independence
- Have their voice heard

Everyone has these rights, whatever their age, ability, gender or beliefs. The right to live safe from harm is particularly important for adults at risk.

Who is at risk?

You may be at risk of harm if you have difficulties with making decisions, communicating with people or living on your own.

Difficulties like these may be caused by many reasons, such as:

- Frailty
- Physical disability
- Learning difficulties
- Issues with your mental health
- An acquired brain injury

Or you may be in a situation where someone is trying to make you do things or stop you doing things (this is called coercive control).

What does safeguarding involve?

Safeguarding means:

- Taking steps to keep you safe from harm
- Supporting you to make your own decisions
- Making sure you get a say in what happens to you
- Helping you keep your independence
- Reporting any suspected abuse to the HSE Safeguarding Teams, Gardaí, or both

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Professionals, services, families and friends all need to be aware of safeguarding issues. We must work with, and support, people who are at risk – to keep them safe from harm.



/ What is adult abuse?

Adult abuse is when someone treats you badly – causing you harm or distress or violating your human rights. For example, it can involve hurting or frightening you, controlling your life and your money, and neglecting your needs. These days, adult abuse increasingly takes place on the internet or by smartphone.

It can happen gradually so that it comes to seem 'normal' over time.

In some cases, adult abuse can be very dangerous and it can be a serious crime.

Adult abuse is too common

Almost 15,000 cases of alleged abuse are reported to the HSE Safeguarding Office each year. The actual figure is likely to be much higher, because not all cases are reported and some are reported to other authorities. We must all play our part in preventing and reporting abuse.

What are the different types of adult abuse?

Abuse can take many forms, and they are often combined. The most common types are psychological abuse, physical abuse, financial abuse and neglect.

Psychological

- Threats
- Causing you fear, shame or humiliation
- Isolation – keeping you apart from other people
- Verbal abuse – such as scolding or shouting
- Preventing you from receiving services you need

Physical

- Hitting, kicking, pushing or rough handling
- Threatening to use force
- Giving you the wrong type or amount of medication

Financial

Financial abuse happens when someone takes control of your finances without your consent. For example, they might spend your money, keep hold of your welfare benefits or use your bank card without your permission. They might try to make you change your will, sell your home or give your possessions or assets away.



Neglect

Neglect means not taking proper care of someone. This could mean failing to:

- Provide the food or medicine you need
- Help you wash and change
- Let you do a course of education or training
- Protect you from harm

Sexual

Sexual abuse means any type of sexual activity that you have not consented to. It could range from indecent exposure to taking photos of you undressing or to rape. It can occur among people of any age.

Organisational

This happens when a care home, hospital, care agency or other organisation allows its staff to neglect or mistreat the people they are meant to look after. It can be due to poor systems of management, poor standards of care or poor communication.

Online

Online abuse is an increasing problem affecting people of all ages, including young adults. Abusers may use your email or social media account to scam, threaten or bully you. They may share your personal information or photos without your consent.

Coercive control

Coercive control is a pattern of bullying or controlling behaviour. It is often part of domestic abuse and can involve several forms of mistreatment. For example:

- Stopping you from seeing your friends or family
- Controlling where you go, what you spend or what you wear
- Not letting you get support from a health centre or social centre

Cuckooing

This is where someone takes over your house without your consent. Or they may move in with you as your carer and then take control of your finances.

Peer to peer

Peer-to-peer abuse takes place between at-risk adults living in residential care. It may include verbal or physical attacks, stealing, unwanted sexual behaviour or damage to your belongings.

Mate crime

This is when someone tricks you into believing they are your friend and then uses you for their own purposes – such as sex, money or a free place to live.

Discrimination

Discriminatory abuse is where you are treated unfairly, or experience harassment or abuse, due to your gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion or membership of the Traveller community.

/ Signs of adult abuse

Abuse may be hard for carers or visitors to spot, as a person affected by it may make excuses or not want to talk. Look out for signs like these:

Psychological

- Loss of confidence
- Becoming very quiet
- Becoming anxious

Physical

- Unexplained bruises, marks or injuries
- Unusual weight loss
- Dirty or unsafe living conditions

Neglect

- Poor hygiene
- Bedsores
- Hunger

Financial

- Unexplained shortage of money
- Benefit or pension being collected but not handed over
- Unexpected changes to a Will or Power of Attorney

/ Report it

If you, or someone you know, are experiencing adult abuse, you should report it. Help is available.

You don't need to be certain that abuse is happening before raising a concern. If something doesn't feel right – report it.

If you are concerned that an adult is being abused, contact the HSE safeguarding service. You can report your concern by email or phone to your regional HSE Safeguarding and Protection Team, or by email on the HSE safeguarding portal.

There are nine regional teams across the country. See the list of contacts on the next page.

If a danger is immediate and serious, report it urgently to An Garda Síochána. Call 999 or 112, or contact your local Garda station.



More information

Safeguarding Ireland

Safeguarding Ireland promotes the safeguarding of at-risk adults and provides useful information.

- Website: <https://safeguardingireland.org>
- Email: info@safeguardingireland.org

Report adult abuse

If you have a worry or a concern – contact the HSE.

For general information: www.hse.ie/safeguarding

To report a concern online at the HSE portal:
<https://adultsafeguardingportal.hse.ie>

To contact your local HSE Safeguarding and Protection Team, phone or email:

- Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal:
Email: safeguarding.cho1@hse.ie / Phone: 071 983 4660
- Roscommon, Galway and Mayo:
Email: safeguarding.cho2@hse.ie / Phone: 091 748 432

- Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary:
Email: safeguarding.cho3@hse.ie / Phone: 067 464 70
- Cork and Kerry:
Email: safeguarding.cho4@hse.ie / Phone: 021 492 7550
- South Tipperary, Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford:
Email: safeguarding.cho5@hse.ie / Phone: 0818 101 101
- Wicklow, Dún Laoghaire and Dublin South East:
Email: safeguarding.cho6@hse.ie / Phone: 01 216 4511
- Kildare, West Wicklow, Dublin West, Dublin South City and Dublin South West:
Email: safeguarding.cho7@hse.ie / Phone: 045 920 410
- Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath, Louth and Meath:
Email: safeguarding.cho8@hse.ie / Phone: 01 691 4632
- Dublin North, Dublin North Central and Dublin North West:
Email: safeguarding.cho9@hse.ie / Phone: 01 795 9528.

If there is danger and it is urgent – contact the Gardaí.

- Call 999 or 112
- Or contact your local [Garda station](#).



Contact:
HSE Teams www.hse.ie/safeguarding
Gardaí if an immediate danger **999/112**



Adult Safeguarding Day

Adult Safeguarding Day takes place each year in early November and is an annual day to raise public awareness. Its goal is to increase the understanding of adult safeguarding and to inform people about preventing, reducing and reporting adult abuse. It is delivered in partnership between Safeguarding Ireland and the HSE.

Find out more

www.safeguardingday.ie

Safeguarding Ireland

Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20204851



safeguardingday.ie



**Adult
Safeguarding
Day**