

Safeguarding adults and Covid-19

Learning to strengthen future practice

This briefing has been produced by the Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board following learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews, local and national data and feedback from practitioners involved in safeguarding adults work.

The issue	What can you do?
<p>Increased risks, vulnerability, and complexity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Covid-19 and associated lockdowns have meant some adults with care and support needs have been at increased risk of abuse and neglect. There has been an increased prevalence of some types of abuse, in particular domestic abuse, self-neglect and scams.• Reduced face-to-face contact from professionals and others has sometimes meant abuse and neglect has been hidden or unknown for longer.• Some adults with care and support needs have been reluctant to seek help and support when they need it – because they are fearful of catching Covid and/or not wanting to be a burden to services.• More complex cases are being reported and managed via safeguarding adults procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be familiar with your organisation's current guidance on face-to-face contact and when seeing someone in person is appropriate.• Be alert to abuse or neglect having been hidden.• You may need to offer additional encouragement, reassurance or navigation to services. You might need to offer to refer someone onto a service/professional on the person's behalf.• Read our guidance on preventing abuse and neglect during Covid-19 which highlights some of the services and support available to respond to the increasing risks and vulnerabilities.• Complex cases need robust multi-agency management via safeguarding adults procedures, using Strategy, Protection Plan and Core Group Meetings.• Most agencies have Safeguarding Adults Leads, Mental Capacity Act Leads and legal advice. Seek advice when risks are escalating or in complex cases and try to do this as early as possible. The Local Authority Safeguarding Adults Unit run an Advice Line for professionals from all agencies, Monday-Friday, 9am-4pm (0191 278 8156).
<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication between professionals and with the people we are trying to support can be more difficult.• Some services and professionals have changed the way that they work, many have moved to remote working with communication happening more commonly online or over the telephone.• During different phases of the pandemic, services have had to change quickly in response to new government guidance. When working in a multi-agency context, this can be particularly confusing as practitioners from different organisations might not be as clear about what their colleagues in other parts of the system are able to do or offer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't make assumptions about what you are being told. Use the ASK – SHARE – RECORD – CHECKBACK model for effective communication.• Technology has had a significant impact on the ways of working, it has increased opportunities for multi-agency working and engagement with professionals - use virtual multi-agency meetings, which are now well established and work well.• Remember that there will be circumstances (even during lockdowns) where it will be appropriate to see someone in person.• Read our Making Safeguarding Personal during Covid-19 guidance about how to involve an adult at risk (or their representative) in the safeguarding adults process.

The issue	What can you do?
<p>Leadership and managerial support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The increased volume of safeguarding adults activity, increased complexity and difficulties in communication places pressure and strain on front-line staff. • Managers are pivotal in supporting their staff and leading effective safeguarding adults arrangements within their own organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you are familiar with the increased volume and complexity of safeguarding adults work at this time and how this impacts upon your organisation and your staff. • Robust supervision arrangements for staff provide the space for safeguarding adults cases (particularly those that are complex) to be discussed and managerial support and input to be offered. • Promote the support available to staff – e.g. Safeguarding Adults Leads and legal advice as well as support for staff welfare and wellbeing. • Familiarise yourself (and your staff) with escalation processes under safeguarding adults procedures. Know where or who you can go to, to share concerns about increased risks/vulnerabilities or where there might be professional disagreements.

<p>Communication with the public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning from the first part of the pandemic highlighted that messages such as “stay at home” and “protect services” may deter people from seeking help and support when they really need it. • With less professional contact with adults with care and support needs, members of the public are crucial in identifying and reporting possible abuse and neglect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think carefully about any slogans or phrases that are used about restrictions and possible secondary impacts. • Provide clarity on the services that are available and how they are operating. • Communicate the steps that are being taken to reduce risks around people contracting Covid-19 when going to appointments or visiting services. • Ensure safeguarding adults messages are promoted widely (to people who use your services and the wider public), including what abuse and neglect is and how it can be reported. Use the NSAB’s communication and marketing toolkit to help.
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Further reading

[Safeguarding adults and coronavirus in Newcastle Covid-19 adult safeguarding insight project](#) (LGA & ADASS, December 2021)
[Adult M 7-Minute Briefing](#)
[Adult L Safeguarding Adults Review](#)

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