

## **Safeguarding in the context of Covid-19 (Coronavirus)**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This document sets out guidance as to how staff should undertake safeguarding work during the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. Emergency planning poses complex professional challenges and pressures for all staff.
- 1.2. Knowledge about COVID-19 is evolving quickly and government guidance is under constant review. It is vital to read this document in the context of the latest government guidance. Check the Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England guidance [here](#).
- 1.3. The Care Act and related guidance remains the basis for all our safeguarding work. This supplementary safeguarding staff guidance is to assist staff by outlining a consistent approach with a view to keeping service users and staff safe during the pandemic. Professional judgement should be exercised for each case, and where there is any concern then staff should discuss with a Team Manager or Service Delivery Manager.

### **2. Context**

- 2.1. As a general principle, the current government guidance is that everyone should cease social contact, particularly with vulnerable groups such as the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions. In Adult Social Care this includes limiting visits to care homes, GP practices, hospitals and people's own homes as much as possible.
- 2.2. These challenging and unprecedented times have the potential to increase the risk to our most vulnerable citizens. It is therefore vital that we all consider how Covid-19 could impact on individual's wellbeing and safety. Appendix A details new areas of risk raised by Covid-19. You need to be aware of and consider these risks when screening a safeguarding concern, when deciding if the criteria for a s42 enquiry have been met, and when safety planning.

### **3. Determining decision when safeguarding concern is raised**

- 3.1. When a safeguarding concern is received, it should be screened in the usual way using the [Safeguarding Threshold for Access to Safeguarding Services Matrix](#) to determine if it meets the criteria for a safeguarding enquiry. Information should be gathered by phone and by email to support you to make the decision on whether to commence a safeguarding enquiry.
- 3.2. If possible, the person who has experienced abuse or neglect, or their representative, should be contacted by phone or email to determine their perspective on the situation and to find out their outcomes. Good practice suggests we should visit people to gain assurance they are safe and well, but given the current government guidance you will need to consider alternative options to visiting. It is therefore important to consider whether there is another professional visiting the person who might be able to offer you the information you need. For example, the person may be regularly visited by a district nurse or carers who can give you an update on the person's

safety and also their views on the safeguarding issue. You can also consider using video calling if the person has a suitable application on their phone, to have a more personal face to face discussion (via WhatsApp/FaceTime/Skype).

#### **4. When visits are required**

- 4.1 If a visit is deemed essential, a pre-visit Covid-19 questionnaire must be completed and the visit must be approved by a Team Leader or Senior Social Worker.

#### **5. Setting up virtual safeguarding meetings**

- 5.1. Where possible, safeguarding planning, outcomes and review meetings should be arranged on a virtual basis. This can be done by inviting everyone to a virtual meeting using whatever technology is appropriate (e.g. MS Teams, Meeting Dial in by assigned telephone provider).
- 5.2. The meeting will be conducted in the usual way and minutes will be captured in a light touch way virtually. Particular importance should be given to the recording of the justification for decisions being made.

#### **6. Safety Planning**

- 6.1 The following framework [Responding to COVID-19: the Ethical Framework for Adult Social Care](#) intends to serve as a guide for the difficult decisions that will have to be made when planning adult social care responses. You may find some of the content useful when reaching decisions in relation to safeguarding planning. It reinforces that consideration of any potential harm that might be suffered, and the needs of all individuals, are always central to decision-making.
- 6.2 You will need to give particular consideration as to whether proposed plans are safe and sustainable, given the current restrictions on social contact between individuals. As with any safeguarding safety planning, explicit consideration should be given to the person's capacity to make or be involved in specific decisions.
- 6.3 Appendix B offers simple resources that may be helpful when supporting individuals to understand and respond to some of the specific risks raised by Covid-19.

#### **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1. The Coronavirus pandemic presents significant challenges and staff are encouraged to keep themselves and service users as safe as possible though taking sensible precautions, in line with the government guidance. Being flexible and using technology is essential to ensure that the service can continue to function effectively.

## Covid-19 Safeguarding Risks

These challenging and unprecedented times have the potential to increase the risk to our most vulnerable citizens. It is therefore vital that we all consider how Covid-19 could impact on individuals wellbeing and safety. The following are new areas of risk Covid-19 raise, which you need to be aware of and consider day to day when:

- You are supporting people; and
- Assessing people for care and support.

### **Financial Abuse/Exploitation** – as a result of:

- The risk of people/community groups offering to support vulnerable adults, who could overcharge for support, sell necessities at a premium or sell 'cures';
- Low income families on zero hour contracts or at risk of reduced/no work needing access to money;
- More people social distancing or self-isolating could increase their risk from scams; and
- Take up of loans from loan sharks to make ends meet.

Interesting BBC news article - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-51991245> *Coronavirus: Man in court over fake Covid-19 treatment kits.*

### **Befriending** as a result of:

- Increased number of over 70 years-olds and people with underlying conditions social distancing or self-isolating requiring support for daily activities, such as shopping; and
- Some of these people will not be appropriately DBS checked.

### **Self-neglect** as a result of:

- Individuals may not be able to access food or will not go out for food for fear of catching the virus;
- Those who cannot or will not go out and neglect their personal hygiene; and
- Deterioration of physical ability due to prolonged periods at home leading to an inability to care for themselves.

### **Impact on informal carers** as a result of:

- Reduced access to respite that could lead to stress and subsequently, abuse of an adult with care and support needs; and
- Carers may need to self-isolate, or they may become ill and require hospital treatment, thus leaving the cared for without support.

### **Increased risk of Domestic Abuse** as a result of:

- Social distancing or self-isolation for extended period increasing time the victim spends with the abusive partner; and
- Those who display symptoms of COVID-19 may be unable to leave the home to seek help and support.

### **Individuals cancelling visits**

- It is essential to check the alternative arrangements – are they safe and sustainable;
- You should reiterate the original purpose of the visit emphasising the matters of greatest concern; and
- Explicit consideration should be given to the person's capacity to make this decision.

**This is not an exhaustive list. Please consider what particular risks could arise for the people you support and how your organisation will effectively manage these alongside the pressures of responding to Covid-19.**

### Covid-19 Safeguarding Resources

- To support your work, the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership has developed two briefing notes. One is aimed at raising awareness with people who are offered or need support whilst self-isolating and how to report, and the other is a useful briefing on the new emerging safeguarding risks that professionals may encounter whilst working with adults with care and support needs. Please use them where you feel it appropriate. They can be downloaded from the TWSP website: [https://www.telfordsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk/coronavirus\\_safeguarding](https://www.telfordsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk/coronavirus_safeguarding)
- There is information on Covid-19 in 20 different languages should you need it, available at this link: <https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/#>
- There is information on Covid-19 in Easy to Read Format on the Mencap website: <https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/coronavirus>