



Last updated: December 2025

Next review date: December 2026

Safeguarding adults at risk policy – England

This policy applies to all paid staff and volunteers, including the Joint Leadership Team and the Board of Trustees, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, associates, students, or anyone else working on behalf of Contact.

Purpose of policy

- To protect adults at risk who receive, or whose families receive support, advice or services from Contact.
- To provide staff and volunteers with overarching principles that guide our approach to enable them to contribute to the prevention of abuse of adults at risk through raising awareness and providing a clear framework for action when abuse is suspected.

It is aimed at protecting the vulnerable adult and the worker, also recognizing the risks involved in lone working.

Contact staff and volunteers will often find themselves in situations, either individually or collectively, where they are meeting adults at risk e.g. through groups and workshops, parent forums, helpline enquiries and one-to-one support. If staff or volunteers have concerns that they are dealing directly with a vulnerable adult who might need support, then this policy will help shape how that concern can be addressed.

You can find our external safeguarding statement on the Contact website [Safeguarding | Contact](#)

Legislation and guidance that underpin this policy

- The Care Act England 2014: Safeguarding Adults
- Care and Support Statutory Guidance

In England, the Care Act 2014 is the legislation that relates to safeguarding adults at risk. The Act sets out a clear legal framework for how local authorities and other parts of the agencies should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect.

Local authorities have safeguarding duties. They must:

- Lead a multi-agency local adult safeguarding system that seeks to prevent abuse and neglect and stop it quickly when it happens.
- Make enquiries, or request others to make them, when they think an adult with care and support needs may be at risk of abuse or neglect and they need to find out what action may be needed.
- Establish Safeguarding Adult Boards (SAB) including local authority, NHS and police, which will develop, share and implement a joint safeguarding strategy.
- Carry out Safeguarding Adult Reviews when someone with care and support needs dies as a result of neglect or abuse and there is concern that the local authority or its partners could have done more to protect them.
- Arrange for an independent advocate to represent and support a person who is the subject of a safeguarding enquiry or review if required.

Any relevant person or organisation must, under the Act, provide information to Safeguarding Adult Boards if and when requested.

This policy should be read alongside Contact's policies, procedures and guidance on:

- Role of the Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSO) and safeguarding review group guidance.
- IT security and acceptable use policies.
- GDPR policy.
- Recruitment Policy and Procedure.
- Safer Recruitment Policy.
- Equality and Diversity Policy.
- Compliments and Complaints Policy.
- Whistleblowing Policy.
- Health and Safety Policy.
- Lone Working Policy and Procedure.
- Confidentiality Policy and Procedure.

Contact's responsibilities

Contact must ensure all staff, volunteers and anyone else working on behalf of Contact are aware of the safeguarding adults at risk policy, England. All Contact staff and volunteers are required to follow Contact's internal referral safeguarding procedures.

Contact will ensure that all staff and volunteers have had adequate training. This training is provided via e-learning. Additional revision e-learning should take place at least after every two years. This will be organised by HR. Freelance workers will be expected to provide updated proof of refresher training.

Additional process training will be provided by the Contact Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSO). In addition, operational staff may access training through the local authority where they are based or through other appropriate national or local providers.

Contacts Board of Trustees review this policy annually. The Board has appointed a designated safeguarding lead who periodically meets with the safeguarding review team lead executive director: Meagan Leggett.

Contact's other responsibilities are:

- To notify the appropriate agencies if abuse is identified or suspected.
- To ensure that all referrals to services contain all relevant information we have in relation to identified risk and vulnerability.
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely ensuring all necessary checks are made, including through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or nations equivalent.

Responsibilities of Contact employees, volunteers and other representatives:

- To be familiar with the safeguarding adult at risk policy and procedures.
- To take appropriate action in line with the Safeguarding Adult At Risk policy.
- To declare any existing or subsequent convictions. Failure to do so will be regarded as gross misconduct, possibly resulting in dismissal.

Support for those who report abuse

All those making a complaint or allegation or expressing concern, whether they be staff, volunteers, service users, carers or members of the general public, should be reassured that:

- They will be taken seriously.
- Their comments will usually be treated confidentially, but their concerns may be shared if they or others are at significant risk.
- Both staff and service users reporting abuse will be given support as needed.

The at risk adult has the right:

- To be made aware of this policy.
- To have alleged incidents recognised and taken seriously.
- To receive fair and respectful treatment throughout.
- To be involved in any process as appropriate.
- To receive information about the outcome.

Definition of at-risk adult

For the purpose of safeguarding, the term 'vulnerable' has a precise meaning. If you have a safeguarding concern, it is important to decide whether you think that adult meets the definition of vulnerable as set out below.

Safeguarding Adults: A National Standards Framework developed by the Association of Directors of Social Services in England describes vulnerable adults as **adults 'who may be eligible for community care services so that they can access their human right to a safe and secure future'**.

Adults 'who may be eligible for community care services' are those whose independence and wellbeing would be at risk if they did not receive appropriate health and social care support. They include adults with physical, sensory, and mental impairments and learning difficulties. They also include family and friends who provide personal assistance and care to adults on an unpaid basis.

Some adults are less able to protect themselves than others and have some difficulty making their wishes and feelings known. This may make them vulnerable to abuse.

For the purpose of this document, 'adult' means a person aged 18 years or over.

A vulnerable adult can be a person:

- With a mental health problem (including dementia).
- With a physical disability.
- With drug and alcohol related problems.
- With a sensory impairment.
- With a learning disability.
- Who has a physical illness.
- With an acquired brain injury.
- Who is frail and/or is experiencing a temporary illness.

Who may be:

- Living in their own home.
- In hospital.
- In a residential care and/or nursing home.
- Attending a day centre.
- Attending a social hub.
- Without a permanent home.

Definition of Abuse

"Abuse is the harming of another individual usually by someone who is in a position of power, trust or authority over that individual. The harm may be physical, psychological, or emotional or it may be directed at exploiting the vulnerability of the victim in more subtle ways (for example, through denying access to people who can come to the aid of the victim, or through misuse or misappropriation of his or her financial resources). The threat or use of punishment is also a form of abuse. In many cases, it is a criminal offence" iCentre for Policy on Ageing

Types of Abuse

Physical abuse

- Bodily assaults resulting in injuries e.g., hitting, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, inappropriate sanctions.
- Bodily impairment e.g., malnutrition, dehydration, failure to thrive.
- Medical/healthcare maltreatment.

Sexual abuse

- Rape, incest, acts of indecency, sexual assault.
- Sexual harassment or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented or could not consent or was pressured into consenting.
- Sexual abuse might also include exposure to pornographic materials, being made to witness sexual acts and encompasses sexual harassment and non-contact abuse.

Psychological/emotional abuse includes:

- Including threats of harm, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, enforced isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
- Humiliation.
- Bullying, shouting, swearing.

Neglect

- Including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services.
- The withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Self-neglect

Types of self-neglect include:

- Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety.
- Neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings.
- Inability to avoid self-harm.
- Failure to seek help or access services to meet health and social care needs.
- Inability or unwillingness to manage one's personal affairs.

Financial or material

- Including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Discriminatory abuse

Unequal treatment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation ('protected characteristics' under the [Equality Act 2010](#)).

- Verbal abuse, derogatory remarks or inappropriate use of language related to a protected characteristic.
- Denying access to communication aids, not allowing access to an interpreter, signer, or lip-reader.
- Harassment or deliberate exclusion on the grounds of a protected characteristic
- Denying basic rights to healthcare, education, employment, and criminal justice relating to a protected characteristic.
- Substandard service provision relating to a protected characteristic.
- Including racist, sexist, or based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs, or similar treatment.

Modern slavery

Modern Slavery is the exploitation of people who have been forced, deceived, or coerced into a life of labour and servitude. It is a crime hidden from society where victims are subjected to abuse, inhumane and degrading treatment. Examples of enslavement include:

- A person who is forced to work or serve – through fear and threats of violence.
- Is owned or controlled by an 'employer' who uses mental or physical abuse to exercise control.
- Dehumanised, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property'.
- Being kept in substandard working/living conditions.
- Physically constrained or has restrictions placed on his/her freedom of movement.
- Modern Slavery is linked to Human Trafficking, but not all victims of modern slavery have necessarily been trafficked.

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting.

Religious, social, or cultural reasons are sometimes given for FGM. However, FGM is abusive, dangerous and a criminal offence.

There are no medical reasons to carry out FGM. It doesn't enhance fertility and it doesn't make childbirth safer. It is used to control female sexuality and can cause severe and long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health.

Radicalisation

Radicalisation is a process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the

status quo or reject and/or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice.

The process of radicalisation may involve:

- Being [groomed](#) online or in person.
- Exploitation, including [sexual exploitation](#).
- Psychological manipulation.
- Exposure to violent material and other inappropriate information.
- The risk of physical harm or death through extremist acts.

Vulnerability factors:

Anyone can be radicalised but there are some factors which may make a person more vulnerable. These include:

- Being easily influenced or impressionable.
- Having low self-esteem or being isolated.
- Feeling that rejection, discrimination or injustice is taking place in society.
- Experiencing community tension amongst different groups.
- Being disrespectful or angry towards family and peers.
- Having a strong need for acceptance or belonging.
- Experiencing grief such as loss of a loved one.

These factors will not always lead to radicalisation.

Extremism

Extremism is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. It includes calls for the death of members of the British armed forces (HM Government, 2011).

In 2024, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published a new definition of extremism for England (DLHC, 2024). Extremism is defined as the support or promotion of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance that aims to:

- deny or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others
- undermine or overturn the UK's system of democracy and democratic rights
- intentionally create an environment that permits or enables others to achieve either of the above.

The new definition also set out types of behaviour which could constitute extremism, including:

- using or excusing violence towards a group of people to stop them from using their legally defined rights and freedoms
- seeking to overthrow or change the political system outside of lawful means

- using or excusing violence towards public officials, including British armed forces and police forces, to stop them carrying out their duties
- attempting to radicalise and recruit others, including young people, to an extremist ideology.

Domestic abuse

Domestic violence and abuse includes any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. It also includes so called 'honour' -based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. Coercive or controlling behaviour is a core part of domestic violence.

Online abuse

Online is any type of abuse that happens on the web, whether through social networks, playing online games or using mobile phones.

Adults can be at risk of online abuse from people they know, as well as from strangers. Online abuse may be part of abuse that is taking place in the real world (for example bullying or grooming). Or it may be that the abuse only happens online (for example persuading children to take part in sexual activity online).

Abusers can contact adults at any time of the day or night, the abuse can come into safe places like their bedrooms, and images and videos can be stored and shared with other people.

Signs and symptoms of abuse

It is important to remember that an adult at risk may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and that abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time. There is no absolute criterion on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm.

Information on signs of adult abuse from the [Social Care Institute for excellence](#)

Contact's internal safeguarding referral process

Guidance and documentation around Contact's incident reporting process, including process flowcharts, the safeguarding incident form and descriptions of the role of the designated safeguarding officers (DSO), [are located on the intranet](#).

Designated Safeguarding Team

Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs)

- Angie Fenn
- Tom Bobbin
- Harriet Squirrell
- Catherine McGee

Trustee lead

- Jamileh Tufail

Please email the safeguarding team on:

safeguarding@contact.org.uk

Out of office hours:

Harriet Squirrell 02076088773

Further reading:

- [Ann Craft Trust - A national charity which exists to minimise the risk of abuse of adults: online resources.](#)
- [Social Care Institute for Excellence – The Care Act and Safeguarding Adults: online resources.](#)