FREE PRINTABLE TOOLKIT

Safeguarding Concern Toolkit

Recognise, respond, record and report a safeguarding concern with confidence. Practical tools for anyone who works with children or adults at risk.



You don't need proof that abuse has happened before raising a genuine concern. If you're worried, pass it on.

What's inside: the 4 R's

Recognise
Signs of 7 types of abuse and neglect, at a glance.

Page 2

Respond
A step-by-step flowchart, disclosure dos and don'ts, and a pocket card.

Pages 3–4

Record
A fill-in concern record with a body map, and how to write facts, not opinions.

Pages 5–6

Report
A follow-up log, key contacts and what happens after you report.

Page 7

How to use it

Fill in on screen
Open in a free PDF reader, such as Adobe Acrobat Reader, and click the boxes to type. Or print and write by hand.

Keep it to hand
Cut out the pocket card on page 4 and add your safeguarding lead's details.

Use it as a team
Go through it in a team meeting, induction or supervision session.

Who it's for: Care and support workers · Teaching assistants · Volunteers · Healthcare staff · Supervisors and managers

Important: always follow your organisation's safeguarding policy, and use its own forms if it has them. Procedures differ across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This toolkit supports safeguarding training but doesn't replace it.

Recognise the signs

Warning signs aren't always obvious. Some appear gradually, through changes in behaviour or daily routines. A concern can also start with something you see, something you're told, or a person seeming frightened or unable to express their wishes.

Physical abuse

Hitting, pushing, rough handling or other actions that cause harm.

- Unexplained or repeated bruises
- Injuries that don't match the explanation
- Flinching or fear of being touched

Emotional or psychological abuse

Threats, intimidation, humiliation or controlling behaviour.

- Withdrawal, anxiety or low confidence
- Fear of a particular person
- Being belittled, shouted at or threatened

Financial abuse

Misusing or taking someone's money, property or belongings.

- Missing money or belongings
- Unexplained bank transactions
- Someone else controlling their finances

Neglect

Essential care or support needs not being met.

- Poor hygiene or unsuitable clothing
- Not enough food or drink
- Missed medication or unmet care needs

Sexual abuse

Unwanted sexual contact, sexual assault or exploitation.

- A disclosure of unwanted contact
- Distress around certain people
- Unexplained injuries or infections

Organisational abuse

Harmful or degrading practices within a service.

- Rigid or disrespectful routines
- Poor supervision or staffing
- Repeated unsafe care practices

Exploitation and coercion

Taking advantage of someone for personal benefit.

- Being controlled or kept from family
- Pressure to hand over money
- Possible signs of modern slavery

Also watch for

The Care Act 2014 statutory guidance also lists these types of abuse in adults:

- Domestic abuse
- Discriminatory abuse
- Self-neglect

Why context matters. One sign on its own doesn't confirm abuse. Consider the person's circumstances, the information you have and any repeated patterns. If you have a genuine concern, report it so the right people can look at it.

Three terms to know

Safeguarding concern
A reason to believe someone may be experiencing harm, or be at risk of it.

Disclosure
When someone tells you, or shows you, information about possible abuse or mistreatment.

Allegation
A claim that a particular person has behaved improperly or caused harm.

1 Recognise | 2 Respond | 3 Record | 4 Report

What to do if you have a concern

Focus on the person's immediate safety, accurate recording and prompt reporting. The steps depend on how urgent it is, your setting, and whether it involves an adult or a child.

1 Is anyone in immediate danger?

Check first. Emergencies need action straight away, not a routine report.

YES: call 999

Keep the person safe, if it's safe for you to do so. Then tell your safeguarding lead.

NO: go to step 2

2 Listen and stay calm

Give the person time. Let them speak in their own words, and take what they say seriously. See page 4.

3 Record the facts

Write down what you saw or heard as soon as possible, using their exact words. Use the form on pages 5–6.

4 Report promptly

Tell your designated safeguarding lead or manager the same day, or follow your organisation's procedure.

5 Follow up

Check your concern was received and acted on. If nothing happens and you're still worried, escalate it.

Who do I report to?

1. Your designated safeguarding lead (DSL)
2. Your line manager or safeguarding manager
3. A senior manager
4. **Adults:** the local authority adult safeguarding team
5. **Children:** local children's social care

If the concern is about your manager

Go to another senior manager, or report it directly to the local authority safeguarding team. You can also use your organisation's whistleblowing policy.

The person's wishes (adults)

Ask what the person wants to happen, and record it. Consider their consent, mental capacity and safety. Information may still need to be shared without consent, for example if others are at risk or a crime may have been committed.

Worried about a child?

Talk to your DSL or local children's social care. You can also call the **NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000**.

Don't investigate it yourself or confront the person you're worried about. Your job is to recognise, respond, record and report. Trained professionals decide what happens next.

What happens after you report?

1. Information gathered
The safeguarding lead or team looks at what's known so far.

2. Risk assessed
They decide how urgent it is and whether anyone needs protecting now.

3. The person involved
Where safe, they talk with the person about what's happened and what they want.

4. Support or referral
This could be a safety plan, extra support, a referral or a formal enquiry.

You may not be told every outcome, as information is shared on a need-to-know basis. That doesn't mean nothing has happened.

Responding to a disclosure

If someone tells you about possible abuse or neglect, how you respond matters. Stay calm, listen and make sure it reaches the right people.

Do

- Listen without interrupting
- Take it seriously
- Let them use their own words
- Stay calm and reassuring
- Explain who you'll need to tell, and why
- Record it as soon as you can

Don't

- Ask leading or suggestive questions
- Promise to keep it a secret
- Investigate or look for evidence yourself
- Confront the person accused
- Show shock or disbelief
- Delay passing it on

Helpful things to say

"Thank you for telling me."

"You've done the right thing."

"I need to share this with people who can help."

If they ask you to keep it secret: explain kindly that you can't promise that, but you'll only tell the people who need to know to help keep them safe. Say this early, before they share more than they want to.

Straight after the conversation

- Make sure the person is safe now
- Note anything you saw, such as injuries
- Don't discuss it with anyone who doesn't need to know
- Write down their exact words, the date and the time
- Tell your safeguarding lead the same day
- Look after yourself: talk to your lead or supervisor if it has upset you

Pocket card: fill in the back, cut along the dashed line, fold in half and keep it with your ID badge

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SAFEGUARDING POCKET CARD

LISTEN | REASSURE | RECORD | REPORT

- ✓ Listen, stay calm, take it seriously
- ✓ Use their words. Record facts, date and time
- ✗ Don't ask leading questions or promise secrecy
- ✗ Don't investigate or confront anyone
- ✓ Report to your safeguarding lead the same day

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WHO TO CONTACT

Safeguarding lead	
Lead's phone	
Deputy / manager	
Local safeguarding team	

Emergency: call 999 · Police non-emergency: 101

Safeguarding concern record

Part 1 of 2

Write down what you saw or heard as soon as possible. Keep to the facts, use the person's own words, and sign and date it.

Fact: "The resident stated at 2.30 pm that they had not received lunch. I informed the shift manager at 2.40 pm."

Opinion: "The staff obviously forgot to feed her again." Avoid guesses, labels and assumptions.

1 Details

Date of concern

Time

Location

Your name

Your role

Who the concern is about (initials or reference)

Age group

☐ Adult ☐ Child

Date and time recorded

2 What happened

What did you see or hear? (facts only: what, when, where, who)

The person's exact words (write them in quotation marks)

Who else was present?

Any explanation given, and by whom?

Continue on page 6 →

Safeguarding concern record

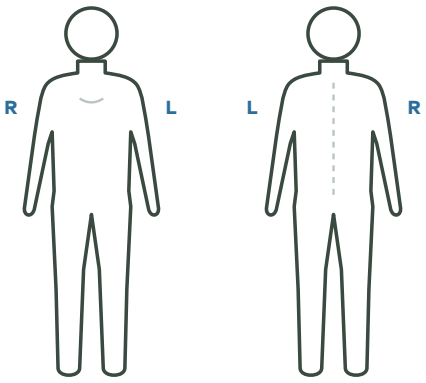
Part 2 of 2

Who the concern is about (initials or reference)

Date of concern

3 Body map

Mark any visible injuries only. Don't examine or undress the person.



Describe each mark (number it on the body map; give size, colour, shape and position)

4 Action taken

What did you do straight away?

Was anyone in immediate danger?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Were emergency services called?

☐ Yes ☐ No Ref:

The person's views and wishes (adults: what do they want to happen?)

5 Reporting

Reported to (name)

Their role

Date and time reported

How was it reported?

☐ In person ☐ Phone ☐ Email ☐ Online form

Reference number (if given)

Your signature (or type your name)

Date

Keep it confidential. Store this record securely and share it only with people who need to know.

Report and follow up

Keep a note of every conversation after you report. If you don't hear back, or you're still worried, follow it up or escalate it.

Follow-up log

Date	Who I spoke to	What was agreed	Next check-in

Key contacts

Contact	Name	Phone
Designated safeguarding lead		
Deputy safeguarding lead		
Line manager		
Local adult safeguarding team		
Local children's social care		

Emergency: 999 · **Police non-emergency: 101** · **NSPCC Helpline** (worried about a child): 0808 800 5000

Section 42 enquiries (adults in England)

Under the Care Act 2014, the local authority must make enquiries, or ask others to, if it has reasonable cause to suspect an adult:

1. has needs for care and support,
2. is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
3. as a result of those needs, can't protect themselves from it.

Not every concern leads to a Section 42 enquiry. Other support may be more suitable.

Build your safeguarding knowledge

Study the online Level 3 Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults course from LIBM, at your own pace.

View the course →

This toolkit gives general information and is not legal advice. Always follow your organisation's safeguarding policy and your local safeguarding procedures.