Carers and Safeguarding Adults

The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services identifies some safeguarding scenarios where carers might experience abuse, neglect or isolation:

1. Carers speaking up about abuse or neglect within the community or within different care settings.
2. Carers who may experience intentional or unintentional harm from the person they are trying to support or from professionals and organisations they are in contact with.
3. Carers who may unintentionally or intentionally harm or neglect the person they support.

Risk Factors for carers suffering abuse, neglect or isolation

Aggressive, abusive or frightening behaviour of the cared-for

The carer is unable to meet the needs of the cared-for, especially if this happens over a long time and there is no support from family, friends or professionals

Poor relations or communication between the cared-for and carers, including lack of respect or courtesy

The cared-for does not appear to consider the needs of the carer or family members or how their situation may impact on them

The cared-for takes control over all aspects of daily living (finances, property etc)

The cared-for refuses help and support from anyone other than the carer but also refuses to be left alone

The cared-for takes out their anger about their situation on the carer

Such risk factors tend to be greater where the carer lives with a person with dementia.

Some possible reasons why carers won’t report abuse or neglect:

- organisational and staff attitudes to concerns - defensive rather than responsive
- lack of someone to talk to or lack of a source of trusted advice and support
- worries about the impact on the care of the cared-for
- fear of social services involvement and unwanted care alternatives

Risk Factors for carers causing abuse, neglect or isolation

Carers have unmet or unrecognised needs of their own

Are themselves vulnerable

Have little insight or understanding of the cared-for’s condition or needs

Have unwillingly had to change their lifestyle

Are not receiving practical or emotional support from other family members

Are feeling emotionally and socially isolated, undervalued or stigmatised

Have frequently requested help but problems have not been solved
Feel unappreciated by the vulnerable person or exploited by relatives or services

Financial difficulties, issues of who manages finances, whether there is a lasting power of attorney or appointeeship and long standing relationship difficulties can also increase risk of abuse.

Some of the most commonly reported situations by GPs where there was a risk of elder abuse or neglect:

- Carers with problems of their own e.g. psychological or alcohol related
- Older people with dementia who are left alone all day
- Older people in households where too much alcohol is drunk
- Carers who get very angry about the burden of caring
- Older people with dementia who are violent towards their carer
- Carers who are unable to meet the needs for daily care of the older person

**What should health and social care professionals do?**

There should be no assumptions about caring capacity or willingness on the part of families

Social services should include carers in assessments and planning and how their role supporting the cared-for is supported; whole family working should be encouraged

Carers should have access to information, advice and advocacy that is understandable and empowers them to share concerns and change harmful circumstances.

Carers should be able to share their concerns regarding the risk of abuse and neglect without fear of automatic referral for adult protection or risk of removal of the supported person

Professionals need to recognise the stress imposed on carers providing substantial care for someone with dementia and consider strategies to reduce carer anxiety and depression

Professionals should avoid excessive emphasis on the requirements of confidentiality which can place carers at serious risk

**What should carers’ organisations do?**

Approach councils regarding the ADASS guidance for carers

Offer services where statutory services have been declined or cannot be provided

Ask whether the carer’s contribution to the support plan is being recorded

---

**Contact us...**

by telephone: 0300 300 8000
by email: customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
on the web: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
Write to Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ