

Coronavirus information

Volunteering

Safeguarding guidance

Although we typically think of the home as a safe place, for some people being at home, with limited contact with the outside world, can increase their risk of experiencing abuse or neglect. As a volunteer it is important to recognise where a person may be at risk of or experiencing abuse or neglect and what you can do to provide help in a safe way.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is any form of abusive behaviour committed by a partner, former partner or family member. It does not need to involve physical violence; the threat of violence or the presence of controlling behaviour also constitutes domestic abuse. If you are worried that someone who you visit may be at risk of or experiencing domestic abuse, it's important that you discuss your concerns with the manager of the service. Although well-intended, some actions can increase the risk to the victim so discuss your concerns with a manager in the first instance rather than the person themselves. If you think the person is at immediate risk of harm call the police on 999.

Financial abuse

People who are reliant on others for help at this time may be more susceptible to financial abuse. If you are worried that the person you are visiting is being pressured to hand over money, bank details or bank cards, or that they are the victim of a scam, discuss your concerns with them or a manager. You can also read the guidance sheets on Scams awareness.

Neglect

Some older people who have care and support needs will be reliant on others for access to food, medication, personal care, heating and other basic needs. If you are worried that these needs are not being met, try discussing your worries with the older person to understand what gaps exist. The older person may be neglecting their own needs or the person who usually helps them may not be attending to them for a variety of reasons. If you are concerned that the person is at risk of or experiencing neglect, please discuss your concerns with your manager. You can also raise your concerns with the local council's adult social care team.

What can I do to help?

As a volunteer it is very likely that you have taken on this role to help others who are experiencing difficulties at this time. However, it's important that you are aware of the limitations of your role. By doing more than you should, you may be introducing more risks into the person's life or putting yourself at risk. For example, if you attend someone's home to deliver shopping and find that they need some support with personal care, you

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may decide to offer them some help. However this is a regulated activity and should only be carried out by someone who has the appropriate checks in place. The best thing that you can do is to raise your concerns with your manager or with the local council who can ensure that the right support is arranged.

Helpful contact numbers:

If you are worried that you or someone you know is at risk of abuse or neglect you can speak with:

- Age UK Advice Line (8am –7pm 7 days a week)
0800 678 1174 contact@ageuk.uk
- Adult Social Care at your local council
- Your GP or other NHS health providers
- The Silver Line 0800 4 70 80 (24 hours a day)
- Action on Elder Abuse helpline: 0808 808 8141
- The Police - You can call the local police on the 101 non-emergency number or call 999 immediately in an emergency.