

COVID-19, social isolation and safeguarding adults

Advice for professionals

We know that social isolation is an increasing risk factor in relation to abuse and neglect. In particular, we know that incidences of domestic abuse, self-neglect and carer stress will increase with social isolation. With more people being asked to self-isolate as a result Covid-19 this needs to be a key consideration when undertaking Section 42 enquiries. Social isolation can mean:

- Abuse/neglect is hidden from professionals or others;
- People do not get the support they need;
- People feel like they do not want to ask for help for fear of being an added burden;
- Increased household stress and tension;
- People ask for help from people who might want to take advantage of their vulnerable position.

Some advice to consider:

- Use existing tools and guidance to assess risk:
 - [Northumberland 10 Step procedure](#)
 - [NSAB Risk Threshold Tool](#)
 - [Self Neglect Guidance](#)
- Ensure you factor in Covid-19 pressures to any risk assessments.
- As always, consider mental capacity, control and coercion on a person's ability to make decisions and keep themselves safe.
- Seek advice from the Safeguarding Adults Team/Legal if you need to.
- Plans to manage risk might include:
 - Referring/opening the case to safeguarding adults procedures if it isn't already;
 - Undertaking the Risk Indicator Checklist and subsequent referral to MARAC. If you are asking another agency to do this, please ensure you get feedback that this has been done. **MARAC will continue to operate at this time.** The Safeguarding Adults Team continues to be the single point of contact for MARAC referrals from Adult Social Care.
 - Referral to domestic abuse or carer support agencies

- Flagging address/person(s) on Adult Social Care records and asking other agencies to do the same where appropriate;
- Undertaking an assessment/re-assessment of need for the person and/or carer.
- Identifying family/friend/neighbour support and ways in which this could be done via phone/internet if possible;
- Contingency arrangements for the person's care should the person's informal support need to self-isolate or be unable to provide care;
- Mental capacity assessments and best interest decisions;

Take into consideration that smaller organisations might be operating slightly differently. Some organisations have closed their buildings and may have alternative referral routes.

Further information regarding Safeguarding Adults can be found at:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Care/Support/Safeguarding.aspx>

This information has been adapted from Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board materials.