

I only take a few  
euros to cover  
my expenses.  
I never thought  
of it as abuse.



## Promoting the rights of vulnerable adults

[safeguardingireland.org](http://safeguardingireland.org)



Safeguarding  
IRELAND





## About Safeguarding

Safeguarding means living **safely, free from abuse or neglect**. It means people's choices are heard and respected. **Safeguarding is everybody's business.**

We all need to be aware of safeguarding adults and take action to make sure that nobody experiences abuse or neglect, particularly those who are vulnerable.



## Types of abuse

Abuse happens when a person's rights and dignity are not respected by another person. Abuse can be deliberate, or the person causing it may not understand that what they are doing is wrong.

The following are types of abuse:

### Physical

Hitting, kicking, pushing, shaking, rough handling, threat of physical force, giving too much or too little medication.

### Emotional

Intimidation, threats, humiliation, isolation, verbal abuse or being prevented from receiving needed services.

### Sexual

Sexual activity that is unwanted or not understood.

### Financial

Unauthorised or improper use of a person's funds, property, pension or benefits.

### Organisational

Inadequate care, or systematic poor practice by an organisation.

### Cyber

Online (internet, email, or social media) bullying, intimidation, scamming or coercion.

## Neglect

Neglect is when essentials such as food, heating, medication, or hygiene are withheld – and also when a person's resources are not used for their benefit.

## Who is most at risk?

Those most at risk are vulnerable adults who are unable to protect themselves due to:

- **Reduced decision-making capacity**
- **An illness**
- **A physical disability**
- **Age related frailty.**

## A Safeguarding Ireland survey found

- **1 in 2 Irish adults claim experience of vulnerable adult abuse**
- **Physical abuse of vulnerable adults has been witnessed, or suspected, by 1 in 3 adults**
- **Emotional abuse is the most common type with over 1 in 3 having experienced it.**

More than 10,000 cases of alleged abuse are reported to the HSE Safeguarding and Protection Teams each year.

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## How to recognise abuse

Signs of abuse range from changes in a person's appearance to unexpected changes to their financial arrangements.

### Physical

- **Unexplained bruises, marks, or injuries**
- **Unusual weight loss**
- **Physical problems like bedsores**
- **Being shabby, or unkept**
- **Dirty, or unsafe living conditions.**

### Financial

- **Inexplicable shortage of money**
- **Suspicious addition of names to financial accounts**
- **Unexpected changes to will, or power of attorney.**

### Behavioural

- **Becoming noticeably withdrawn, angry or scared**
- **Tearfulness and crying and not saying why**
- **The person is prevented from seeing you on their own**
- **Control – you may have a sense that someone is trying to control a person's affairs.**

## Call it Out

Safeguarding Ireland's advice is – if you suspect abuse – take action and **Call it Out**.

- HSE Safeguarding and Protection Teams provide services and support in each region of the country.
- Call the HSE's National Safeguarding Office at (061) 461 358, or find details of your local Team at [www.safeguardingireland.org](http://www.safeguardingireland.org).



### 1. Money

It is against the law to use another person's money without their consent. If someone is unable to provide consent, approval to act on their behalf must be legally secured with the bank, State, or Post Office. The appointed person must keep records of all spending.

### 2. Medication

It is against the law for any family member, or carer, to change a person's medication or dosage. Changes can only be made by a qualified medical professional.

### 3. Liberty

It is against the law to lock a person into a room, or strap them to a bed. If a person with dementia needs intensive supervision, professional advice and support should be sought.

## To better safeguard their future, all adults should plan ahead and make their future choices known.

### Enduring Power of Attorney

Appoint an Enduring Power of Attorney, which gives financial and legal decision making responsibility to a trusted person or persons of your choosing.

### Advance Healthcare Directive

Talk with your GP or Solicitor about making an Advance Healthcare Directive including your future healthcare preferences, or place of care.

### Think Ahead

Think Ahead is a resource to help members of the public talk about and record their preferences in the event of emergency, serious illness or death. [www.thinkahead.ie](http://www.thinkahead.ie)



### Financial

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Find out more about safeguarding your money and planning ahead in the Banking and Payments Federation Ireland guide at [www.bpfi.ie](http://www.bpfi.ie)

Learn how to identify financial fraud and get advice on how to protect yourself from fraud at [www.fraudsmart.ie](http://www.fraudsmart.ie).



## Safeguarding Ireland research found

- Just 6% of adults had legally nominated a family member, or friend to be their Attorney (under Enduring Power of Attorney).
- Just 8% had discussed a preferred place of care with family, friends, or an appointed Attorney for if they developed a serious, or long-term illness.

Safeguarding Ireland strongly encourages all adults to plan ahead, as this will reduce the risk of abuse.

## Safeguarding Ireland

Safeguarding Ireland is a multi-agency and inter-sectoral body with an independent chair. It was established by the HSE in 2015 in recognition of the fact that safeguarding vulnerable people from abuse is a matter that cannot be addressed by any one agency working in isolation, but rather by a number of agencies and individuals working collaboratively with a common goal.

Safeguarding Ireland brings together 30 key organisations in public services, legal and financial services, the health and social care professions, regulatory authorities and NGOs representing older people, people with disabilities and carers.

All have come together with one objective in mind – to ensure that adults who may be vulnerable are safeguarded.



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