

Protection of Vulnerable Adults in Brent

Multi-agency Policy and Procedures

A brief summary of what to do



Brent Association
for Voluntary Action



Brent **NHS**
Primary Care Trust



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This brief summary on what to do is based on Brent's multi-agency policy and procedures *Protection of Vulnerable Adults in Brent* (2003). For full details, please refer to that document which reflects the Department of Health Guidance *No Secrets* (2000).

Each agency in Brent should have its own policy and procedures that is compatible with *Protection of Vulnerable Adults in Brent*.

The brief summary is intended to highlight some of the key features that staff in various organisations need to know, and what to do in cases of actual or suspected abuse of vulnerable adults.

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1 Key contacts

Brent social services duty desks

Out of hours – emergency

TEL 020 8937 1234

TEL 020 8863 5250

Older people

13-15 Brondesbury Road

Kilburn, NW6 6BX

tel 020 89374003/4871/4870

Physical disabilities including sensory impairment and HIV team

36 London Road, Wembley, HA9 7SS

TEL 020 8937 4621

Drugs and Alcohol

36 London Road, Wembley, HA9 7SS

TEL 020 8937 2114

Brent Council and Brent PCT partnerships

Learning Disabilities Partnership

36 London Road, Wembley, HA9 7SS

TEL 020 8937 4347/4336/4381

Mental Health Partnership

(East) 13-15 Brondesbury Road, Kilburn, NW6 6BX

TEL 020 8937 4549/4557/4571

(North + West) 36 London Road,

Wembley, HA9 7SS

TEL 020 8937 4280/4278/6354

(South) 6 Avenue Road, Harlesden, NW10

TEL 020 8937 4772/4935/4941

Brent Council – One Stop Shop

TEL 020 8937 1200

Police service

Community Safety Unit

Willesden Police Station

TEL 020 8733 3918

National Care Standards Commission (NCSC)

Brent & Harrow area office

166 College Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 1BH

TEL 020 8420 0100

Other useful contacts

Action on Elder Abuse

TEL 020 8765 7000

WEBSITE www.elderabuse.org.uk

Helpline, advice, information, leaflets, training materials and courses

Practitioner Alliance Against Abuse of Vulnerable Adults

TEL 0114 233 5314

Brent Carers Centre

116 Chaplin Road

Wembley, HA0 4UZ

TEL 020 8795 6240

Carers National Association

TEL 020 7490 8818

TEL 0808 808 7777 (helpline)

Counsel and Care

TEL 020 7241 8555 (office)

TEL 0845 300 7585 (local rate – Monday to Friday am)

Advice and information on welfare benefits and other issues.

2 Definitions

2.1 Who is defined as a vulnerable adult?

A vulnerable adult is defined as:

A person aged 18 years or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

2.2 What is meant by abuse?

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons.

2.3 Main different forms of abuse are:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological/emotional
- Financial or material
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Discriminatory
- Institutional

See Appendix 1 for further details – description, examples, indicators.

3 Key policies

- *“There can be no secrets and no hiding place when it comes to exposing the abuse of vulnerable adults”.* (Department of Health)
- The primary aim of all agencies and individuals should be to protect and prevent abuse of vulnerable adults.
- All agencies have a responsibility to ensure that there are guidelines, compatible with Brent's multi-agency policy and procedures, and that staff know and are trained to handle issues and allegations of adult protection appropriately.

4 Key practices

4.1 How to handle a disclosure of abuse – “do’s” and “don’ts”

The person to whom a disclosure of abuse may be made will not necessarily be the person to take forward any investigation of the matter. If someone tells you about abuse, your role is to respond sensitively to the service user and pass the information on to your line manager.

Disclosure may take place many years after a traumatic event or when someone has left a setting in which they were afraid. This delay should not in itself cast doubt on its truthfulness.

If someone discloses abuse to you:

- Stay calm and try not to show shock.
- Listen carefully.
- Be sympathetic. (eg: “I am sorry that this has happened to you”)
- Be aware of the possibility that medical evidence might be needed.
- Tell the person that:
 - They did right to tell you.
 - You are treating the information seriously.
 - It was not their fault.
 - You are going to inform the appropriate line manager.
 - The service will take steps to protect and support them.
- Report to your line manager.
- Write down what was said by the person disclosing as soon as possible.

The matter must be reported (see 4.2 below).

Do not:

- Press the person for more details.
- Promise to keep secrets – you cannot keep this kind of information confidential.
- Make promises you cannot keep. (eg: “This will never happen to you again”)
- Contact the alleged abuser.
- Be judgemental. (eg: “Why didn’t you leave”)
- Mix subjective opinion with the factual record.
- Pass on information to anyone other than those with a legitimate ‘need to know’ eg your line manager or other appropriate person.

4.2 Reporting

- All allegations of abuse of vulnerable adults must be reported to Social Services within 24 hours to the relevant service duty desk or the One-Stop Shop. Social Services is the lead co-ordinating agency.
- If the allegation may involve commitment of a crime, the Police (Community Safety Unit or Police Station) must be informed also immediately, and evidence preserved.
- If the allegation involves a regulated service, the National Care Standards Commission must also be informed within 24 hours.

See Appendix 3 on alerting action to be taken after becoming aware.

4.3 Action that will be taken

Appendix 2 outlines the action that must be taken by Social Services following a referral of alleged abuse of a vulnerable adult.

5 Key issues that require referral to the full document

Check the main Policy and Procedure document for detailed advice on:

- Confidentiality and information sharing.
- Acting in the best interests of vulnerable adults who lack mental capacity.
- Appropriate support to the victims of abuse.
- Responsibility of agencies to alleged perpetrators.
- Roles and responsibilities of all agencies.
- Preserving evidence and record keeping.
- The Adult Protection Enquiry Process including the multi-agency strategy meeting and protection case conference.
- Practice guidances.
- Key relevant legislation.

Appendix 1 – Categories of abuse – examples

Physical abuse

The use of force which results in pain or injury or a change in the person's natural physical state.

Or

The non-accidental infliction of physical force that results in bodily injury, pain or impairment.

Examples of behaviour

- Hitting.
- Slapping.
- Pinching.
- Hair Pulling.
- Pushing.
- Kicking.
- Inappropriate application of techniques e.g. control and restraint.
- Involuntary isolation or confinement.
- Misuse of medication.
- Forcible feeding.

Indicators of abuse include

- Injuries inconsistent with the account of how they happened.
- Lack of explanation as to how injuries happened.
- Injuries inconsistent with the lifestyle of the victim.
- Multiple bruising and or welts on face, lips, mouth, torso, arms, back, buttocks and thighs.
- Cluster of injuries.
- Marks on the body including slap marks, finger marks.
- History of unexplained falls/minor injuries.
- Injuries at different stages of healing.
- Burns (inconsistency with life style).
- Immersion burns or rope burns on arms, legs or torso.
- Induced or fabricated induced illness (formerly called Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy). Injuries or physical symptoms induced, falsely claimed or exaggerated on behalf of the victim by a "carer", spuriously attracting treatments or services.

- Medication misuse eg excessive repeat prescriptions.
- Cuts not likely to be as a result of self injury.
- Abnormally subdued behaviour in the presence of a carer.
- Being left in wet clothing.
- Malnutrition when not living alone.

Sexual abuse

The involvement of the vulnerable adult in sexual activity or relationships which:

- They do not want or have not consented to.
- They cannot understand and lack the capacity to give consent to.
- They have been coerced into because the other person is in a position of trust, power or authority.
- Is against the law.

NB: Sexual relationships or inappropriate sexual behaviour between a member of staff and a service user are **always** abusive and will lead to disciplinary proceedings and possibly criminal charges.

Examples of behaviour

Non-contact sexual abuse

- Inappropriate looking.
- Photography.
- Indecent exposure.
- Pornography.
- Harassment.
- Enforced witnessing of sexual acts or sexual media (eg: pornographic videos).

Contact sexual abuse

- Inappropriate touch anywhere.
- Masturbation of either or both persons.
- Penetration or attempted penetration of the vagina, anus, mouth – with or by penis, finger, other objects.

Physical indicators

- Bruising and or bleeding, pain or itching in genital area.
- Foreign bodies in genital or rectal openings.
- Infections, discharges in the above areas or sexually transmitted diseases.
- Pregnancy in a woman who is unable to consent to sexual intercourse.
- Unusual difficulty in walking or sitting.
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing.
- Bruising to thighs and upper arms.
- Wetting or soiling.
- "Love" bites.
- Self inflicted injury.

Behavioural indicators

- Significant change in sexual behaviour or attitude.
- Overt sexual behaviour/language.
- Poor concentration.
- Withdrawal.
- Sleep disturbance.
- Excessive fear/apprehension of, or withdrawal from relationships.
- Fear of staff or other carers offering help with dressing, bathing etc.
- Reluctance of person to be alone with an individual known to them.
- Self-harming.

Psychological or emotional abuse

Behaviour that has a harmful effect on the vulnerable adult's emotional health and development or any other form of mental cruelty that results in:

- Mental distress.
- Denial of basic human and civil rights eg self-expression, privacy and dignity.
- The negation of the vulnerable adult's choices, independent wishes and self esteem.
- Behaviour that causes isolation or over dependence and has a harmful effect on an adult's emotional health, development or wellbeing.

Examples of behaviour

- Prevention of a vulnerable adult from using services.
- Denial of access to friends.
- Denial of religious and cultural needs.
- Ignoring.
- Lack of stimulation and meaningful occupation – common for people with dementia.
- The use of threats, humiliation, bullying, swearing, and other verbal abuse.
- Intimidation.
- Deprivation of contact.
- Lack of positive reinforcement.
- Harassment.

Indicators of abuse include

- Air of silence when the alleged perpetrator is present.
- General lack of consideration for the needs of the vulnerable adult.
- Vulnerable adult not allowed to express an opinion.
- Privacy denied in relation to care, feelings or other aspects of life.
- Denial of access to vulnerable adult especially when the person is in need of assistance.
- Denial of freedom of movement e.g. locking person in a room, tying them to a chair.
- Alteration in psychological state e.g. withdrawal or fear.

The following can occur in vulnerable adults for a variety of social, psychological or medical reasons but could also be an indicator of mistreatment or abuse.

- Insomnia.
- Low self-esteem.
- Excessive ambivalence, confusion, resignation, agitation.
- Change of appetite.
- Weight loss/gain.
- Tearfulness.
- Unexplained paranoia.

Financial or material abuse

The use of a vulnerable adult's property, assets, income funds or any resources without their informed consent or authorisation. Includes:

- The individual's funds or resources are used inappropriately by a third person.
- Unsanctioned use of a person's money or property.
- Entry of the vulnerable person into contracts or transactions that he/she does not understand, are to their disadvantage, or have been entered into as a result of duress, undue influence or pressure of some kind.

NB: Financial abuse is very often associated with other forms of abuse.

Examples of behaviour

- Taking personal possessions.
- Misappropriating money valuables or property.
- Forcing changes to a will and testament.
- Preventing access to money, property or inheritance.
- Stealing.
- Loans between the vulnerable adult and member of staff or paid carer.
- Loan made to any one if made under duress, threat or dishonestly extracted.

Indicators of abuse include

- Unexplained lack of money or inability to maintain life style.
- Unexplained withdrawal from accounts or bank account activity.
- Power of attorney, enduring power of attorney obtained when the vulnerable adult is unable to comprehend and to give consent.
- Failure to register an enduring power of attorney after the vulnerable adult has ceased to have mental capacity.
- Signs of financial hardship in cases where the financial affairs are being handled by a receiver or an attorney whether that is an ordinary power or an enduring power that has been registered.
- Money belonging to the vulnerable person that is being withheld from them.
- Recent change of deeds or title to property.
- Unusual interest shown by family or others in the vulnerable adult's assets.
- Person managing the financial affairs is evasive or uncooperative.

- Lack of clear financial accounts held by residential/nursing home or carer.
- Mis-use of personal allowance by person managing finances in residential/nursing care or by carer.
- Informal carers moving into a person's home, living rent free and there being no clearly set out financial arrangements.

Neglect and acts of omission

The repeated deprivation of assistance that the vulnerable adult needs for important activities of daily living, including the failure to intervene in behaviour that is dangerous to the vulnerable adult or to others.

NB: This form of abuse may arise in cases where the carer is also a vulnerable adult. It is then important to respond in such a way to ensure that the carer's needs are addressed, consideration given to their right to an assessment and to access to an independent advocate.

Examples of behaviour

- Failure to provide food, shelter or clothing, heating.
- Failure to provide or arrange medical care.
- Failure to provide hygiene or personal care.
- Inappropriate use of medication or over medication.
- Denial of religious or cultural needs.
- Denial of educational, social and recreational needs.
- Ignoring.
- Lack of stimulation.
- Lack of emotional warmth.

Indicators of abuse include

- Withholding or failure to provide care, food, clothing or heating which has a detrimental effect on the person's welfare.
- Denial of religious or cultural needs.
- Physical condition of the vulnerable adult is poor e.g. bed sores, unwashed, ulcers.
- Inadequate physical environment.
- Untreated injuries and medical problems.
- Inconsistent or reluctant contact with medical and social care agencies.
- Failure to engage in social interaction.
- Poor personal hygiene.

Discriminatory abuse

When values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunity to some groups or individuals. It is the exploitation of a person's vulnerability, resulting in repeated or pervasive treatment of an individual which excludes them from opportunities in society eg health, justice, civic status and access to services and protection. Incitement to discriminate is treated as equivalent to actual discrimination.

NB: The principles are contained in legislation eg Race Relations Acts, Sex Discrimination Act, Disability Discrimination Act, Human Rights Act.

Examples of behaviour

- Unequal treatment.
- Verbal abuse.
- Inappropriate use of language.
- Derogatory remarks.
- Harassment.
- Deliberate exclusion.

Indicators of abuse include

- Lack of respect shown to the individual.
- Signs of a sub-standard service offered to an individual.
- Repeated exclusion from rights afforded to ordinary citizens such as health, education, employment, criminal justice and civic status.
- Tendency to be withdrawn and isolated.
- Expressions of anger, frustration, fear or anxiety.
- Denial of a person's communication needs e.g. not allowing access to a signer or lip reader.

Institutional abuse

The mistreatment or abuse of a vulnerable adult by a regime or individuals within an institution.

Examples of behaviour

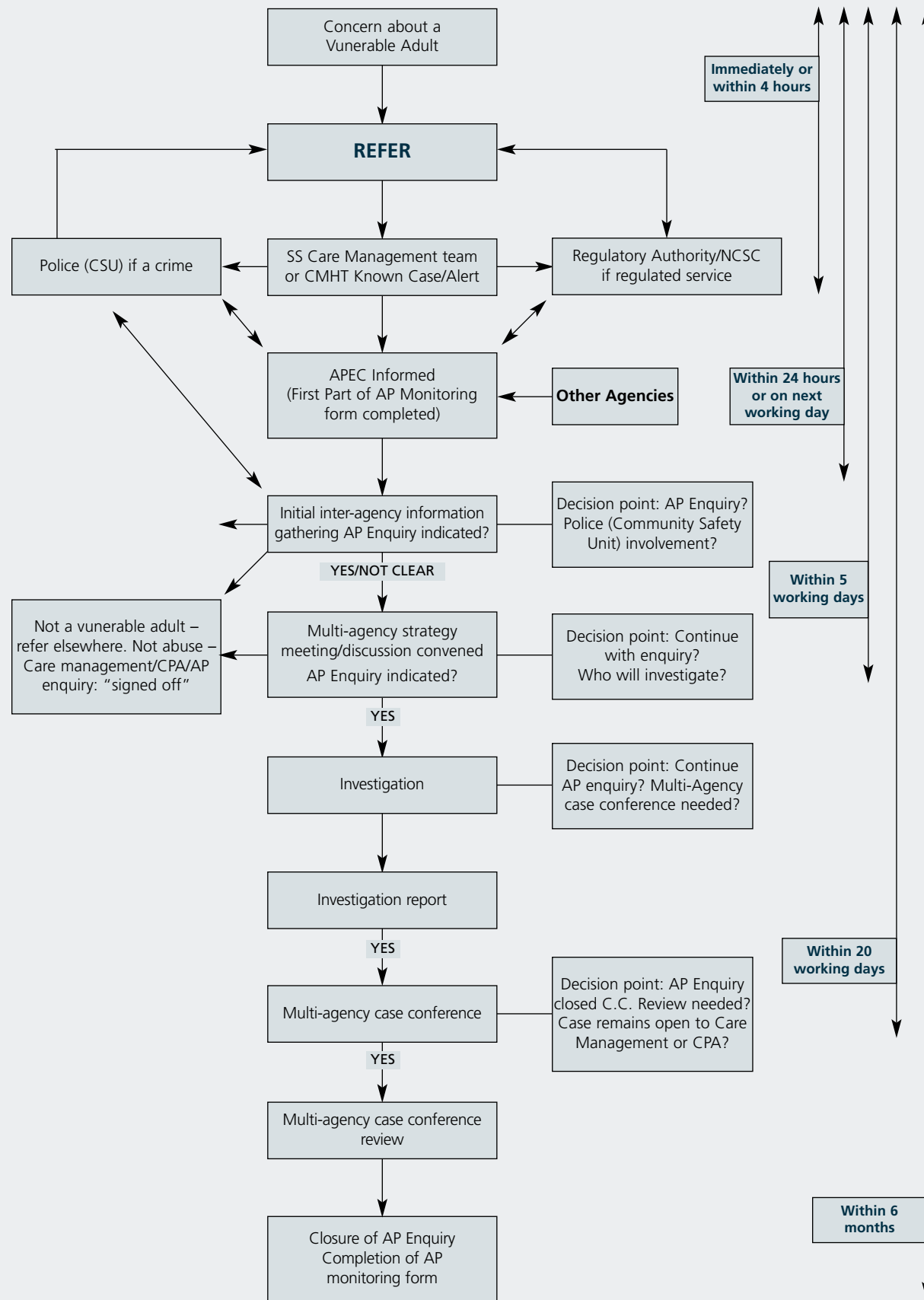
- Discouraging the involvement of relatives or friends in the care of the vulnerable adult.
- Rundown/overcrowded establishment.
- Authoritarian or rigid management.
- Lack of managerial leadership and/or staff supervision.
- Disharmony in the staff group.
- Pervasive abusive and disrespectful attitudes among staff.

- Residents abusive to staff and other residents.
- Residents sexually or racially harassing staff or other residents.
- Inappropriate use of physical interventions (control and restraint) by poorly trained staff.
- Poor practice in the provision of intimate care.
- Staff not taking account of individuals' needs, culture, religion or ethnicity.
- Failure to take action where there have been incidents of racial or sexual harassment.

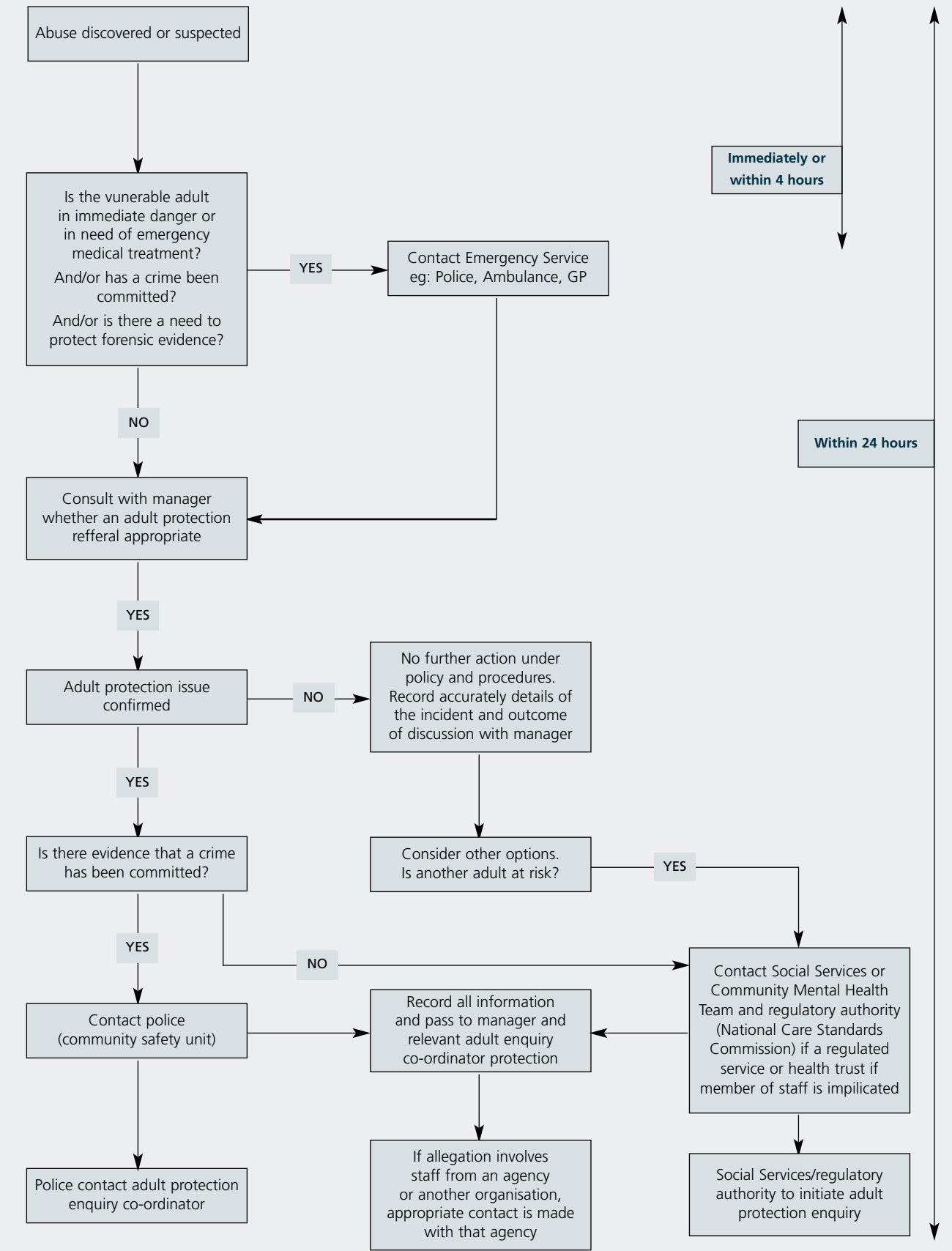
Indicators of abuse include

- Lack of flexibility/choice.
- Inadequate staffing levels.
- Inappropriate or poor care.
- No opportunity for drinks or snacks.
- Lack of choice or consultation eg over meals, bed times etc.
- Misuse of medication.
- Inappropriate use of restraint.
- Sensory deprivation e.g. denial of use of spectacles or hearing aids.
- Loss of and failure to replace dentures.
- Lack of personal clothing and possessions and use of communal personal toiletries.
- Lack of adequate procedures for e.g. management of finances, medication.
- Failure to ensure privacy or personal dignity.
- Lack of respect shown to the person e.g. derogatory remarks.
- Controlling relationship between staff and service users.
- Poor professional practices e.g. record keeping.
- Denial of visitors or phone calls.
- Interference with mail.
- Lack of opportunity for social, educational or recreational activity.
- Public discussion of personal matters.
- Inadequate or delayed response to medical requests.
- Missing documents eg no individual care plans.

Appendix 2 – Adult protection enquiry flowchart



Appendix 3 – Alerting action to be taken after becoming aware



*“There can be no secrets
and no hiding place
when it comes to
exposing the abuse
of vulnerable adults.”*

Department of Health, No Secrets, March 2000