

Public Policy Statement
Safeguarding older people
October 2025

Summary

The abuse of older people remains one of our society's most pressing challenges, with profound physical, emotional, and social consequences for victims.¹

We all have the right to live free from abuse of any kind. Our age or circumstances should have no bearing or effect on this basic right.² Age does not diminish an individual's right to live with dignity and respect.³

Safeguarding includes a range of activities aimed at upholding an individual's fundamental right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

Legislation is an essential component of safeguarding adults; it has the capacity to set statutory duties and powers so that adult protection is undertaken effectively by all key agencies. Other tools to protect adults from abuse include renewed policy, increased public awareness, training, and access to advocacy services.

We welcome the publication of Welsh Government's National action plan to prevent the abuse of older people. The plan has three overarching themes: 1. older people are supported to live independently and with dignity and are able to access relevant support from safeguarding services where they are at risk of abuse or neglect; 2. older people experiencing domestic abuse or sexual violence are able to access relevant support from Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) services when required; 3. older people are protected from becoming at risk of abuse or neglect.⁴ Welsh Government must robustly monitor the implementation of the Action Plan to ensure its effectiveness.

The action plan builds on the legislative frameworks established through the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014,⁵ the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016,⁶ and the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.^{7,8}

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 puts adult safeguarding on a statutory footing and forms a legal framework for adult protection in Wales. The Codes of Practice and Regulations shape the implementation of the Act by completing the framework within which social services operate. These include

Statutory Guidance in relation to Safeguarding and a Code of Practice on Advocacy. The Act has also established Safeguarding Boards.

Agencies must work together to safeguard individuals, to uphold an individual's fundamental right to be safe, to minimise vulnerability, and to support those who have experienced abuse or neglect.

Local authorities must put their duty to make enquiries at the heart of their response to initial safeguarding concerns being raised, with improved transparency in the way that referrals and concerns are processed. Furthermore, they must ensure that safeguarding referral forms are accessible and available in a range of formats to facilitate referrals by third parties, including older people.

Training on safeguarding adults must be mandatory for all staff involved in the care and support of older people, and human rights must be mainstreamed into the development of policy and practice in the care and support of older people.

Independent advocacy can help to redress the power imbalance that occurs in abuse situations and can enable the person to take back some control. In order to deliver 'voice and control', in line with the stated intention of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, access to independent advocacy support is crucial – especially for adults at risk of abuse, and those who are subject to a safeguarding investigation. The Welsh Government and local authorities should work with voluntary service providers to raise awareness of advocacy services among older people and the professionals who work with them.

Older people are often targeted by financial fraud and scams. We believe that there should be improved measures to protect older people from fraud and scams. The UK Government should place a duty on service providers to reduce the volume of fraud through postal, telephone and internet networks.

We believe that the Welsh Government must ensure that equal weight is given to the prevention of abuse in Wales, and support the development of innovative programmes of preventative work.

Summary of public policy proposals

- Welsh Government must robustly monitor the implementation of the National action plan to prevent the abuse of older people to ensure its effectiveness.
- Any future UK human rights legislation must protect the rights and freedoms in the European Convention on Human Rights, must not undermine the effectiveness or scope of the Human Rights Act or the potential for enforcing it, and must reflect the particular circumstances of Wales.
- All agencies involved in the care and support of older people must adopt a consistent approach to safeguarding. Training on safeguarding adults must be mandatory for all staff involved in the care and support of older people.
- Local authorities must put their duty to make enquiries at the heart of their response to initial safeguarding concerns being raised, with improved transparency in the way that referrals and concerns are processed.
- Local authorities must ensure that safeguarding referral forms are accessible and available in a range of formats to facilitate referrals by third parties, including older people.

- Human rights must be mainstreamed into the development of policy and practice by all agencies involved in the care and support of older people.
- Improved inter-agency working is required between adult protection and domestic abuse services so that older people receive appropriate support and interventions as early as possible.
- The Welsh Government and local authorities should work together with voluntary service providers to raise awareness and understanding of the existence, purpose and benefits of advocacy among both older people and the professionals who work with them.
- All older people who have been the victim of abuse, regardless of whether they meet the criteria of an adult at risk, should be offered the services of an advocate by local authorities.
- The UK Government to provide greater protection for older people targeted by fraud by placing a duty on postal, telephone and internet providers to reduce the volume of scams in their networks.
- The Welsh Government must ensure that equal weight is given to the prevention of abuse in Wales, and support the development of innovative programmes of preventative work to ensure this happens.

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¹ [Written Statement: National Action Plan to Prevent the Abuse of Older People Update Report 2025 - A National Commitment to Combat Abuse of Older People \(15 July 2025\) | GOV.WALES](#)

² Age Cymru (2024) Safeguarding older people in Wales from abuse and neglect. Factsheet 78w. November 2024 [Microsoft Word - FS78w - November 2024](#)

³ Welsh Government (2020) Strategy for an Ageing Society: age friendly Wales. <https://gov.wales/strategy-ageing-society-age-friendly-wales>

⁴ [National action plan to prevent the abuse of older people \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

⁵ [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)

⁶ [Regulation and Inspection of Social Care \(Wales\) Act 2016](#)

⁷ [Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)

⁸ [Written Statement: National Action Plan to Prevent the Abuse of Older People Update Report 2025 - A National Commitment to Combat Abuse of Older People \(15 July 2025\) | GOV.WALES](#)