



7-minute briefings: Supporting people living with dementia to be involved in adult safeguarding enquiries

Background

Research has demonstrated that older adults who have dementia are more likely to experience abuse and neglect than those adults without a dementia diagnosis. People living with dementia are entitled to live a life free from abuse and neglect, and where abuse is experienced, action should be taken to prevent or stop it.



Why it matters

Studies focusing on abuse of people with dementia have identified high levels of abuse in the community, suggesting that psychological abuse is the most common, with physical abuse and neglect less common. Growing concerns have been identified about financial abuse and exploitation in the community. Several studies have highlighted issues of abuse and neglect of people with dementia living in care settings, e.g. most notably threats to residents, avoiding residents with challenging behaviours, not providing enough time when supporting residents to eat and not taking enough care when helping residents to move.



Human Rights

The human rights of people living with dementia are protected in UK law through the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. **FRIEDA** principles can be used as a tool to remember how human rights laws should apply to people living with dementia. These principles focus on **F**airness, **R**espect, **I**dentify, **E**quality, **D**ignity and **A**utonomy.

Strengths-based approach

Strengths-based approaches are a useful way of supporting the human rights of people who are living with dementia. Workers using this approach should identify things which the person is already successful at and seek to build on these. The approach also involves thinking about how issues of culture and diversity might have an impact on the decision in question.

Legal literacy

Knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation and guidance is important for understanding how people living with dementia may be helped to partake in safeguarding enquiries. This includes knowledge of the [Care Act 2014](#) and the related [Care and Support Statutory Guidance](#), as well as the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and its [Code of Practice](#) and the [Making Safeguarding Personal approach](#).

Questions to consider

Consider advocacy – Some people living with dementia will feel reassured if someone close to them can help them communicate or speak on their behalf. Professionals should include friends or family members if this is what the person wants or should consider a referral to [independent advocacy](#) services where the person is unsupported.

Consider decision-making guides – Conversations about safeguarding can be upsetting and often complex. Because of this, practitioners need to consider how people living with dementia might be supported to take part in discussions, in line with [Mental Capacity Act 2005](#) requirements.

Consider how to record outcomes of safeguarding meetings in an accessible way – Meetings which take place as a result of a safeguarding enquiry should be minuted. However, people with living dementia may find it difficult to remember the outcome of a safeguarding decision.

What to do

Provide people with clear information about safeguarding - Members of the public are likely to be unaware of the principles of the Care Act 2014, or what safeguarding means.

Think about the person's communication and cultural needs - Check-lists can be used to identify these needs. E.g., identifying the type of dementia, preferred method of communication, as well as their ethnicity, religious views or sexuality.

Think about where the conversation is held - Safeguarding enquiries involve talking to people about abuse and neglect.

Build relationships with the person living with dementia - Where possible, people who are conducting safeguarding enquiries should work with members of staff who already have an established and trusting relationship with the person concerned. If this isn't possible then workers should try and build a relationship.

