

Citizens Advice Wandsworth

Safeguarding Procedure



1. Introduction

This procedure should be followed when a volunteer or staff member has concerns about the safety or wellbeing of any of the following:

- a client who is an adult
- a child or children of an adult client
- a client who is a child

The procedure includes confidentiality. Although confidentiality is a key part of our service, it can be breached if someone is at risk and unable or unwilling to give consent.

There is a flowchart of the procedure in Appendix 1.

Principles of adult safeguarding

There are 6 key guidelines which are used by local authorities and other statutory bodies to guide their adult safeguarding activities. These are:

- **Empowerment** - actions or decisions must be based on the presumption of person-led decisions and informed consent
- **Prevention** - it is better to take action before harm occurs
- **Proportionality** - the least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented
- **Protection** - support and representation for those in greatest need
- **Partnerships** - local solutions through services working with their communities
- **Accountability** - accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding

Citizens Advice Wandsworth will use these principles to guide our safeguarding activities.

2. Safeguarding definition

2.1 Definition for children

For the purposes of safeguarding Citizens Advice Wandsworth recognises a child as any young person under the age of 18 years.

Citizens Advice Wandsworth follows advice on child safeguarding issues set out by the NSPCC.

More detailed information can be found in our child safeguarding policy and also on the [NSPCC website](#).

2.2 Definition for 'adults at risk'

Under the Care Act 2014 (in England) and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 safeguarding duties apply to an adult who:

- has care and support needs, and
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- is unable to protect themselves because of their care and support needs

We recognise that many policies and organisations refer to 'adults at risk' or 'vulnerable adults'. This procedure adopts the broader definitions introduced in recent legislation detailed above, which is far-reaching and could potentially cover many of our service users.

More information can be found in our adult safeguarding policy.

3. If there's a serious and immediate risk

Confidentiality considerations should not prevent staff or volunteers from taking immediate action where needed. The safeguarding principles above, including empowerment and proportionality, should be applied.

If a volunteer or staff member believes anyone is at serious and immediate risk they should immediately call 999.

To decide if the risk is serious and immediate you must establish whether **all** of these apply:

- A. There is a danger to someone's health, safety or wellbeing (whether or not they are a client)
- B. The danger is about to happen right away or in a short period of time
- C. Urgent intervention is needed, probably from the police or medical professionals

Your decision must be based on clear evidence rather than suspicions or conjecture, but you will also need to use your judgement. If taking into account all the relevant

factors you believe that all three of the above (A,B,C) apply then you should call 999 immediately and report the issue.

Examples of serious and immediate situations which may justify taking immediate action, regardless of confidentiality and irrespective of whether they involve children or vulnerable adults:

- A client begins to lose consciousness after claiming to have taken an overdose.
- A client picks up a chair. They approach a volunteer aggressively and threaten that they will hit them with the chair.
- Someone previously unknown to Citizens Advice Wandsworth is self-harming in the waiting room by burning themselves with a lighter.

Once 999 has been called and necessary actions undertaken (eg ambulance arrived and the client has been taken to hospital), the safeguarding lead (SL) for Citizens Advice Wandsworth should be informed of the actions taken. In their absence the deputy safeguarding lead (DSL) should be contacted. The SL will complete the **Client concerns form** with a record of what happened. The client concerns form should be kept securely and in line with Citizens Advice Wandsworth's Data Protection policy.

The SL or DSL should also ensure that if the person involved was a client, a confidential note is placed on their case record.

There may be situations when after an emergency situation, a safeguarding referral is still required. Examples of this could include:

- A child with serious injuries who was taken to hospital by ambulance, and who staff or volunteers have suspicions is being abused and will still be at risk after medical treatment.
- An elderly client who has been taken to hospital after suffering breathing difficulties, who appeared dirty, dishevelled and malnourished.

4. Reporting a concern

Where the risk does not warrant an immediate call to 999 (or where a risk remains after an emergency situation), the following processes apply:

4.1. Identify the issue

A safeguarding issue may be the result of:

- a direct allegation of abuse made by a child or an adult

- an allegation by a third party
- a staff member or volunteer seeing or hearing something that prompts a concern

Safeguarding concerns can be raised at any time and this procedure should be followed in all instances.

4.2 Try to get consent

4.2.1 Getting consent from an adult

In situations where you have a concern about an adult client and feel that taking action would be in their best interest (or others') you should always try to get agreement from them. You should always try to get consent to share information unless this would increase a risk of harm or seriously delay the person getting help. Use the safeguarding principles above, including empowerment and proportionality.

If someone gives their agreement for actions to be taken, then these actions can be taken by the person supporting the client. For example, if a client states their carer is withholding their medication and abusing their finances, and asks an adviser to help them call the local safeguarding team, this can be done straight away, without any need for the SL or DSL to be contacted. You should use the client concerns recording form to capture the action taken and update the case record. The SL or DSL should be contacted after the event to tell them the actions taken.

4.2.2 Child clients and where consent is not given

If a staff member or volunteer has a concern about a child, it may not always be appropriate to obtain consent from the child or their parent/guardian/carer. This is particularly important if the adviser has concerns that seeking consent could put the child in more danger.

In these situations and also in situations where an adult you have concerns about has not consented to you reporting these concerns, you should speak to the SL or DSL about next steps.

Staff and volunteers should not act as investigators. It is important that you only record the information that is provided to you and do not ask leading questions.

4.3 Contacting the SL or DSL

When you contact the SL or DSL it would be helpful for them if you were able to advise them of the following:

- Name of the person at risk, their date of birth and contact details (if known)
- Address of the person at risk, including the local authority area
- What are the concerns specifically?
- Does the person at risk have any additional needs or disabilities?
- If someone is responsible for the person at risk, do they have any additional needs or disabilities? Might they need any reasonable adjustments?
- What is the person at risk's first language? And if applicable their parent or carer
- Is domestic abuse a concern?
- Is there, or has there been, social work involvement or any other professional involvement with the person at risk?
- What was the date and time of the disclosure/observation?
- What was the nature of the disclosure; where were you (location)?
- Who raised the concern and what is their relationship to the person at risk?
- What did you see or hear that made you concerned?

The SL or DSL will also be interested in your view on:

- the likelihood of the safeguarding concern materialising
- the impact of the safeguarding concern if it materialises

If staff or volunteers have a concern but do not have all of the information above, they should still contact the SL or DSL. This should not cause them to delay making contact.

These questions form the basis of the client concerns recording form (Appendix 2). Where possible staff or volunteers should use this form to record their thoughts and concerns. However if they do not have the form to hand, then they should still make written notes. Doing so will help the staff member or volunteer accurately convey to the SL or DSL the nature of their concerns and help prevent any important detail being forgotten. Handwritten notes should be kept on file.

Examples of safeguarding concerns which may justify breaching confidentiality:

- A client with young children seems to be living in a hostile environment and you suspect there may be an imminent domestic incident e.g. there is shouting and furniture being pushed over.
- A child client makes a direct disclosure that their uncle is coming to their birthday party next month and he usually does bad things, but they need to keep it a secret.

- An adult client who has a learning disability says they don't have access to their own money and that it is controlled by their father. The client says they are only allowed to have £5 to spend on food a week.
- A child client or child of one of our clients shows visible signs of neglect and/or abuse e.g. a child was going through the bin looking for food and was in dirty clothes (stains on trousers). The child also had visible significant bruising on lower arms.
- An elderly client who is cared for by her husband and who discloses that he bullies her and withholds her medication.

4.4 Actions that the SL or DSL will take

It is no longer a requirement for Citizens Advice Wandsworth to seek advice permission from Citizens Advice before breaching confidentiality to make a safeguarding alert.

The decision on whether the concern meets the threshold upon which a safeguarding alert needs to be made rests with Citizens Advice Wandsworth and will be taken by the SL, or the DSL in their absence. If neither the SL nor DSL is available the decision will be made wherever possible by two members of the service management team – Service Managers and Volunteer & Training Manager. In the event that two managers are unavailable, the most senior manager on duty will reach a decision.

Citizens Advice Wandsworth will always have a process in place to ensure that a SL or DSL (or alternative) is available and can be reached by staff during all hours that the office is providing services to clients.

4.5 Child clients

- The SL or DSL will consider the information provided by the member of staff or volunteer and why they have concerns
- The SL or DSL will ensure that they are putting the safety of the child at the heart of their decision making
- Although it is not mandatory, if the SL or DSL requires assistance to decide if the concern meets the threshold to report they can contact the NSPCC safeguarding helpline - 0808 800 5000
- If the SL or DSL makes contact with the NSPCC helpline they will not disclose the identity of those involved. But they will discuss their concerns and give NSPCC an overview of the situation
- The NSPCC will advise the SL or DSL on the appropriate course of action to take

- The SL or DSL will consider the information they have, and if they contacted the NSPCC the advice they provided. The SL or DSL will decide if it is appropriate to breach confidentiality and report the concern
- The outcome (whether the matter was reported without consent, or whether the matter was not reported) will be noted on the case record

4.6 Adult clients

- The SL or DSL will consider the information provided by the member of staff or volunteer and why they have concerns
- The SL or DSL will ensure that they are putting the best interests of the adult at the heart of their decision making
- The SL or DSL will decide if it is appropriate to breach confidentiality and report the concern
- If the SL or DSL wants further guidance on whether the concern meets the threshold to be reported, they can contact the appropriate local safeguarding adults board
- If the SL or DSL makes contact with the local safeguarding adults board they will not disclose the identity of those involved. But they will discuss their concerns and give an overview of the situation
- The SL or DSL will consider the information they have, and if they contacted the local adult safeguarding board the advice they provided. The SL or DSL will decide if it is appropriate to breach confidentiality and report the concern
- The outcome (whether the matter was reported without consent, or whether the matter was not reported) will be noted on the case record

4.7 Additional support

The decision on whether to breach confidentiality and report a safeguarding concern rests with the SL or DSL at Citizens Advice Wandsworth.

If a SL or DSL requires clarification regarding the safeguarding policy or procedure they can make contact with the Citizens Advice operations team, who will provide them with advice on matters of policy or procedure.

Contact should be made using the [operations contact form](#). The operations team will reply to these types of enquiry within 1 working day.

National Citizens Advice no longer makes a decision on whether confidentiality should be breached in safeguarding concerns. However if the above stages of the procedure have been exhausted and the SL or DSL remains unsure of the correct action to take,

they can contact the Citizens Advice operations team who will discuss with them the circumstances of the case.

Contact should be made using the [operations contact form](#). The operations team will respond to these types of enquiry within an hour.

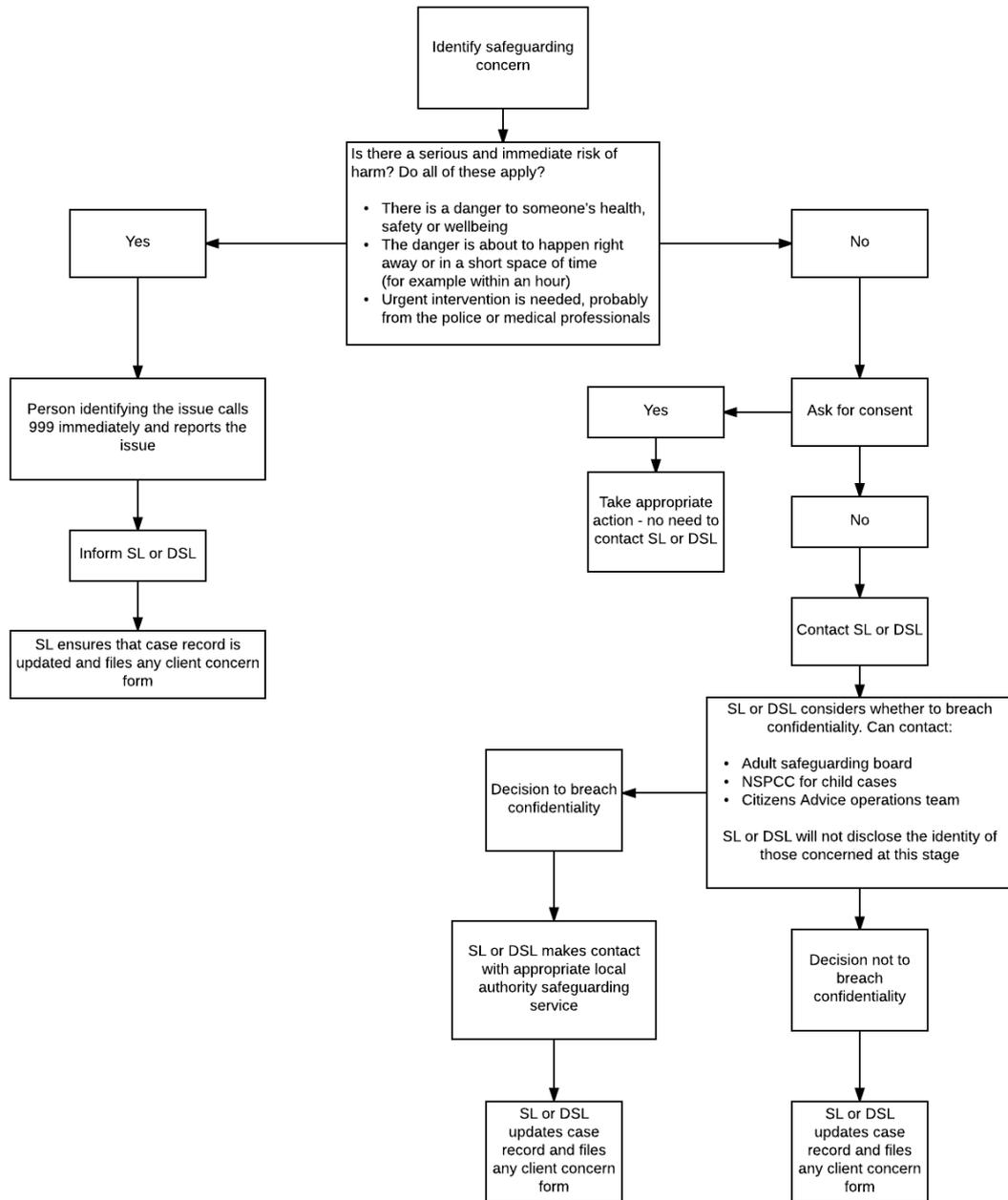
In situations when Citizens Advice Wandsworth and the Citizens Advice operations team needs further guidance, the Citizens Advice operations team will seek support from a confidentiality panel at Citizens Advice. A full response will be provided by the operations team within 2 hours of the original enquiry being received.

5. Access emotional support

It's important that people who have identified safeguarding referrals do not feel responsible for any subsequent action taken. SLs and DSLs should be aware of the need to provide emotional support to staff members or volunteers identifying safeguarding issues. Where the SLs and DSLs line manage the staff or volunteer they should provide this support. Otherwise they should inform the relevant line manager of any report of safeguarding so that they can provide emotional support as necessary.

Appendix 1: Flowchart of the procedure

[Download a PDF of the flowchart](#)



Appendix 2: Client concerns recording form

Citizens Advice Wandsworth client concerns recording form

Completed by:	Date completed:
---------------	-----------------

Client name:	Contact details:	Additional needs or disabilities:
DOB:		
First language:		
Local authority area:		

Parent/Carer name:	Contact details:	Additional needs or disabilities:
First language:		

Date/time and location of the disclosure/observation	
Who raised the concern?	
What is their relationship to the person at risk?	
What are the concerns specifically? What was seen? What was heard? Please list the facts.	
Domestic abuse? Yes/No. If Yes, please provide details.	Details:
Social work involvement or equivalent? Yes/No If Yes, please provide details.	Details:

Other: