

Multi-Agency Briefing: Care and Support Needs and Adult Safeguarding

1. What is Care and Support?

Under the Care Act 2014, 'care and support' refers to the help some adults need to live as independently as possible. This includes practical, emotional, and financial support for older people, people with disabilities or long-term health conditions, people with mental health needs, and carers. Support can include care at home, personal assistants, day services, care homes, or equipment and home adaptations, as well as help to maintain positive personal relationships and to participate in community activities, work, education, training, or volunteering.

2. How Are Needs Assessed?

Local authorities must assess whether someone has an appearance of care and support needs. If they do, the council may provide help directly or support family and friends to do so. To qualify for support, three things must be considered:

1. Do the needs arise from or are related to a **physical or mental impairment or illness?**
2. Do these needs stop the person from doing **at least two everyday activities?**
3. Does this have a **significant impact on their wellbeing?**

Everyday activities include:

- Eating and drinking properly
- Keeping clean
- Using the toilet
- Dressing appropriately
- Staying safe at home
- Keeping the home clean and safe
- Maintaining relationships
- Working, learning, or volunteering
- Using local services (e.g. public transport, leisure)
- Looking after children (if they have caring responsibilities)

Services to support a person's care and support needs aren't solely provided by local authority funded services, they can also be provided by a carer or community resources.

3. Prevention of Care and Support Needs

The Care Act 2014 aims to help people stay independent and well for as long as possible. It requires local authorities to take action to prevent people from developing care and support needs or delay the worsening of existing needs.

Local authorities must:

- Look at what services and community resources already exist (e.g. local charities, support groups)
- Identify people who may have unmet care and support needs
- Identify carers who may need support

They should work with communities and partners (like the NHS) to help people access local support, offer services that prevent, reduce or delay the need for long-term care, and support people to regain skills (e.g. after a hospital stay).

4. Why This Matters for Safeguarding

Understanding care and support needs is essential for safeguarding adults.

The Care Act says a safeguarding duty under section 42 applies when an adult:

1. Has care and support needs (whether or not they're getting help)
2. Is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect **and**
3. Can't protect themselves because of those needs

This includes people who have age-related disabilities, live with a disability, sensory impairment, or long-term illness, experiencing mental health issues (including dementia), or whose substance use has significantly affected their ability to manage their needs. Just being older doesn't automatically mean someone has care and support needs - but older people are more likely to develop them. Understanding care and support needs helps us:

- Decide if someone meets the legal threshold for safeguarding
- Understand why they may struggle to protect themselves
- Identify what support could reduce or remove the risk
- Tailor protection to the person's specific needs (e.g. dementia, mental illness, frailty)
- Focus on preventing harm, not just reacting to it

5. Practical Questions to Ask

- Does the person seem to have a disability, long-term illness, or mental health issue?
- Are they a carer for someone else with care needs?
- Do they seem to need support? Have you asked if they'd like help?
- Are they at risk of, or experiencing abuse or neglect and unable to protect themselves?

If yes, this could be a safeguarding concern. If there's no abuse or risk, but the person still has needs, consider referring them to Adult Social Care for a needs assessment rather than raising a safeguarding concern and/or another service for support, for example if the need is primarily for health concerns, to the GP. They could be signposted to the district council help hubs and to online sources of support.