

## Briefing: Care Act changes to the police role in the safety and protection of adults at risk of harm and abuse

The police have a crucial role to play in the safety and protection of adults at risk of harm and abuse. This includes empowering the community to have the confidence to identify and report signs of abuse and suspected criminal offences. The police have responsibility to train staff how to recognise signs and take action to prevent abuse occurring. In addition, a core policing role is identifying and managing perpetrators who choose to target adults who are vulnerable. The Care Act underpins this duty.

The Act places a requirement that the local chief officer of police is a statutory core member of the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB).<sup>1</sup> Police officers need to be cognisant of their responsibilities in this area as outlined within Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on Safeguarding Adults which provides clear guidance on respective roles and responsibilities. As the 'eyes and ears' of the community, local officers will ensure that they gather and record information and intelligence to enable informed decision making for safeguarding through the multi-agency partnership arrangements.

Local multi-disciplinary procedures will make it clear where and when the police will become involved and the **hierarchy of enquiries** place a criminal investigation as taking precedence, although the local authority will work together with the police to ensure appropriate steps are taken to safeguard and support the adult. There will be occasions where other enquiries can proceed alongside to ensure minimum delays.

It is the responsibility of the police to lead investigations where criminal offences are suspected by preserving and gathering evidence at the earliest opportunity. They have a duty under the Victims Code of Practice 2013 to assess the immediate needs of victims and consider the long term requirement to enable that person to be appropriately supported through the criminal justice system. Police must consult them before taking any action. Where someone lacks capacity to make a decision, police will always act in his or her best interests, taking into account cultural, language and communication needs or any other form of impairments that may require support to facilitate appropriate engagement with the person concerned.

Police have effective ways of assessing and managing risk using the National Decision making model and other accredited risk tools and take appropriate action.

As the lead investigating agency, the police should work with the local authority and other partner agencies to ensure that all relevant information is shared and identified and a risk management or safeguarding plan is agreed at an early stage. In cases where criminal proceedings are deemed inappropriate, the police should agree a course of action with partnership agencies to protect the adult (s).

All officers have a duty to ensure they are up to date with their legal powers and duties, including their responsibilities in relation to the MCA and MHA. Police have multi-agency partnership arrangements in place and staff will understand how to use these. Police foster a “one” team approach that places the welfare of individuals before the “needs” of the system.

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<sup>i</sup> Schedule 2 of the Care Act