

What happens after you report abuse

Deciding what we will do next?

Dudley staff will always take it seriously when someone tells us about abuse, or a situation which they think could lead to abuse.

Everyone is different and will need different support or advice depending on their situation. What we do next will depend on things like:

- **How much danger the person is in.**
For example, if the person is in physical danger, or if there is a chance that the abuse reported could happen again.
- **How much support the person needs.**
Some people will need lots of support in their daily lives, so might need more support to stay safe.
- **What the person wants to happen.**
Sometimes people do not want support from the council or other organisations like the police or health services.

Sharing information with other people

Information given to us is sometimes shared with other people, such as the police or health professionals. This only happens if they need to have this information to help keep someone safe.

Keeping information safe

If you tell us you are worried about someone being abused, you may not always be told all the details of what action is taken. This is because the council has a duty to keep information about people safe.

Finding out more about the situation

A social worker from the council will plan with other people (like health staff and the police) how they can find out more about the abuse reported and how to stop it.

This is called a ***safeguarding enquiry***.

They will decide:

- Who will do the enquiry.
- Who they will speak to.
- When they will do it.

An enquiry will be carried out by the professional who will understand the issues best.

If a crime has been committed, the enquiry will be carried out by the police.

Making enquiries into the abuse reported

The enquiry will look at all the information available to work out:

- Exactly what has happened.
- How the person is at risk of abuse.
- What the person wants to happen now.
- How to support the person to be safe in the future.

The person doing the enquiry will usually meet with the victims of abuse and ask them what has happened, and what help they need to keep safe and to stay in control of their life.

To help us to understand more about the situation, we might also talk privately to other people who know the victim.

We understand that someone may be afraid, or find it difficult, to talk about what has happened to them. The person will be given the information and support they need so that they can say what they want to happen about the abuse reported.

We may invite the victim to a meeting with other people who can help to make sure the person can keep safe. This could involve, family members, social workers, health professionals or the police.

At any meetings, the person can choose to have someone they trust with them, such as a family member, a friend or an advocate. This cannot be someone who is involved in the abuse.

The person can choose to have someone they trust to attend meetings and speak for them if they wish.

Arranging independent support

If we think that the person at risk of abuse needs more support to be fully involved in a safeguarding enquiry, in some circumstances we will arrange for an independent advocate to support them.

How long will a safeguarding enquiry take?

Because each situation is different, it is difficult to say how long an enquiry might take. It will depend on:

- Who is involved.
- How serious the situation is.
- What the person at risk wants to happen.
- If the person is in immediate danger, we will act quickly to keep them safe.

A social worker will keep the person at risk of abuse up to date with what is happening. When the enquiry is finished, the person will be told what was found out, how abuse can be stopped from happening in the future, and provided with any other advice or support that is required.

What is a safeguarding plan?

If the enquiry finds that someone is still at risk of abuse, a plan may be put in place that will explain all the things that different people will do to help the person to keep safe.

The plan could include:

- Support to help the person take action to keep themselves safe and stay in control of their life.
- A change of support or accommodation for the person at risk of abuse.
- Action taken against the person who carried out the abuse
- Action taken against the care and support service that was responsible for the abuse.
- Support to help the person to recover from the abuse

When a plan has been made, a date will be set in the future to make sure that the person is still safe and that the plan is working.