

VULNERABLE PATIENTS

ADULT SUPPORT AND PROTECTION ACT 2007

The act is designed to protect and benefit adults at risk of being harmed who are unable to safeguard themselves, their property and their rights.

What this means for you practically is that you have a **duty to report suspected harm or impending harm to at-risk patients** to the relevant organisations.

Harm may be physical, psychological or affecting the adult's property and rights (eg theft, extortion). Signs of harm range from unexplained injuries, fear of another person, delay in seeking treatment, signs of neglect and many others.

An **“adult at risk”** of such harm is defined in the act by the presence of 3 characteristics:

- The adult is unable to safeguard their wellbeing, property or rights.
- The adult is at risk of harm (from another person or from their own activity).
- The adult is more vulnerable to harm because of disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity than an adult not so affected.

What to do if an adult at risk is identified:

- Report it to the consultant in charge.
- Notify Social Work by phone **and** with an AP1 form (you have a legal duty to do this).
- Datix the incident.
- Report an incident to the police if a crime has been committed.

The social work department then have a variety of powers to investigate the situation and keep the vulnerable adult safe.

Ideally you should attempt to gain consent for informing social work, but even if no consent is forthcoming, you have a **legal obligation to inform the relevant organisations**.

Consider if others are in danger – for example there may be children in the care of the person causing harm.

The AP1 form is available on Staffnet – follow the links Partnership -> MHP -> legislation -> adult support and protection documents.