An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt,
Gnóthaí Baile agus Imirce
Department of Justice,
Home Affairs and Migration

Adult Safeguarding: Protecting Adults at Risk of Abuse

Handbook for Centre Managers

2026

Prepared by the Department of
Justice Home Affairs and Migration
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Introduction

This policy and practice document deals with safeguarding adults at risk of harm in accommodation centres for persons seeking International Protection under contract to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. It also provides guidance to all staff in accommodation centres, the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS), the International Protection Procurement Service (IPPS), the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) and International Protection Support Services (IPSS).

This policy also applies to all Accommodation Centres under contract to the Department. Each Accommodation Centre must complete their own Adult Safeguarding Policy and Statement. These must be displayed in a communal area along with the DLP Contact Details. This document is based on The Law Reform Commission Report Regulatory Framework for Adult Safeguarding 2024, HSE Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse 2014 and HIQA National Standards for Adult Safeguarding 2019.

Services for all protection applicants are delivered in accordance with current Government policies meeting the reception conditions of international protection applicants. This includes provision of accommodation provided directly by Dept of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration in international protection centres or those who are under contract. That system means that State services are delivered to International Protection applicants through the relevant Government Departments and Agencies. e.g. The HSE delivers medical services through the established GP and hospital systems.

Generally, personnel working in accommodation centres are not public servants. They are employees or sub-contractors of the proprietor with whom the Department has a contract. Nonetheless, it is a condition of each such contract that this policy applies to all staff and residents in centres.

Centre Manager Guidance

Prevention of Harm

Many of the residents will interact with agencies from the health and social care sector and the voluntary sector. Prevention of harm will support adults at risk of harm in the centre. IPAS guidance is already available regarding:

1. IPAS Code of Practice for persons working in Accommodation Centres
2. IPAS Policy in relation to Person in Suicidal Distress

3. Policy and Practice Document on safeguarding residents against Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence & Harassment

4. The National Standards for accommodation offered to people in the protection process ("National Standards")

Any adult may experience a time in their lives when they are temporarily unable to protect themselves from abuse. With this in mind, robust preventative measures will help your centre provide a responsive service to such adults who are placed in your centre by IPAS. Services that respond in a timely manner and effectively will minimise the impact of a harmful event. The aim is to minimise the potential or actual harm to a person in an IPAS Centre. The centre will designate a person who will act as the person residents can discuss any safeguarding concerns. This will be clearly identified to all residents when they arrive. Make sure the Adult Safeguarding statement is displayed appropriately and is separate to other IPAS policies.

Induction should involve a concise and accurate description and explanation of adult safeguarding. Please include capacity issues, coercive control and exploitation. Please reference current HSE safeguarding policy and HIQA policy.

With the Asst Decision Making Capacity Act (2015), in mind there may be incidents where centre staff can identify that a person may not have the cognitive capacity to understand relevant information. At times when services have to respond to an incident against the adult's wishes, it should be ensured that the response is proportionate, taking into account their will and preference as much as possible. It needs to be the least restrictive as possible including time limited and the centre needs to be able to demonstrate they can and have reviewed the intervention.

When explaining IPAS House Rules please ensure that you link this to good adult safeguarding practice, e.g.

1. Let residents know that there is a code of practice for staff in centres. This will also explain situations where duty/ managers have to contact or report incidents or concerns AGS/TUSLA
2. Please give clear explanations how a resident may raise concerns. This includes identifying a designated and appropriately trained person who will have a nominated replacement when not rostered.
3. Have a robust and accurate recording system of concerns raised. This includes a mechanism by which your centre can demonstrate how concerns are addressed and monitored and closed off.
4. Centre manager is to ensure staff complete the adult safeguarding course available through HSE and keep a record of certificates of completion from HSELand
5. Communication with all residents in a manner that respects and acknowledges their right to self-determination. In line with the Assisted Decision-making Capacity Act (2015), we assume that everyone has the capacity to make their own decisions.

What is Safeguarding Adults at risk of Harm?

Overall safeguarding adults describes when the service implements a right based and preventative approach to prevent the risk of harm occurring. The approach will demonstrate how the service is supporting those identified as at risk of harm to protect themselves. This approach includes having clear steps identified for staff to follow should a concern of harm or abuse arise.

When a concern is received from a resident the staff member needs to be appropriately trained to deal effectively with the concern and respond or intervene as appropriate.

Where the resident is unable to disclose a concern all appropriate supports to promote the safety and welfare of this resident need to be put in place.

Adult Safeguarding training is recommended for all staff and can be completed on HSeLand

Definitions

Adult at risk of Harm

An Adult at risk of harm is someone who is over 18 years of age and at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, or exploitation by a third party. Due to a physical or mental condition, they will usually lack the mental or physical capacity to protect themselves from harm at the particular time in their lives and will require support to do so.

Capacity

Capacity is the ability to understand the information and being able to weigh up the consequences of their actions at a particular time and be able to retain this information.

CATEGORIES OF ABUSE

Abuse is a single or repeated act, or omission, which violates a person's human rights or causes harm or distress to a person. For the purposes of this policy, the source of this abuse is understood to be a third party.

Physical

This refers to any threat or actual physical harm to a person by another person.

Sexual

This includes rape and assault against a person who has not or cannot give valid consent.

Emotional/ Psychological

This can be behaviour verbal or any kind of intimidation that causes a person psychological distress or anxiety.

Financial/Material

This is where a person is deprived or restricted to use their own control over their finances and personal affairs by another person.

Organisational

This is related to poor or inadequate service delivery that negatively impacts a person and curtails their rights and dignity.

Neglect

This is where one adult who usually has a caring role fails to protect or provide for a person who is under their care in a manner that harms their health or well being.

Coercive exploitation

This describes where one person exerts unreasonable control over another's property or assets with the purpose of gaining advantage for themselves or for others.

Online or Digital

This refers to any abuse or threat of harm carried out towards an individual on any online platform and includes exploitation.

Human Trafficking/ Modern Slavery

This involves the acquisition or movement of people through means such as threat of violence intimidation or exploitation. This can be for domestic servitude, sexual exploitation or organ harvesting.

Suspected Human Trafficking

Where a centre manager becomes concerned that an individual may a victim or is at risk of trafficking, they should report their concerns to An Garda Síochána. In an emergency call 999 or 112.

An Garda Síochána operate a special department dedicated to investigating allegations of human trafficking and supporting victims called the Human Trafficking Investigation and Co-ordination Unit (HTICU). Further details and information on trafficking indicators can be found on **www.blueblindfold.gov.ie**.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) have a specialist team, Anti Human Trafficking Team (AHTT) who helps people who: are experiencing human trafficking now or were trafficked in the past - in Ireland or in another country. This service is free and confidential.

You can contact the HSE service directly for information. Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, Phone: 01 795 8280 or email: antihuman.trafficking@hse.ie , Visit their website www.hse.ie/humantrafficking.

If a centre manager has a concern that a person is a suspected victim of trafficking they should submit an incident report via the IPASinbox@justice.ie and request that a member of the resident welfare team to contact them.

Where an individual is identified as a victim or potential victim of trafficking, IPAS will assess immediate risk, prioritise safety and protection from further harm. Decisions are informed by available information, including vulnerabilities, risk and interagency input.

Access to online training is available for all centre staff via HSeLand which includes modules on:

- Human Trafficking awareness
- HSE Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) Programme

Indicators to consider when you believe you may have an adult at risk of harm in your centre.

Specifically, someone who is unable to protect themselves from harm at a particular time for the following reasons:

- Physical or mental condition: (Examples are brain injury and stroke).
- Such indications may include inability to follow instruction, including being unable to complete a form.
- Repeated occurrences of forgetting appointments etc
- Unable to show they can perform usual activities of daily living without support.
- Unable to retain information.
- Unable to demonstrate that they can weigh up the consequences of taking a risk.
- Avoiding communal residential areas

Where you believe you may have an adult at risk of harm, please be mindful of how you communicate the IPAS House Rules or any new changes such as measures that may need to be taken during National Weather Warnings.

What centre staff can be alert to:

- Be alert to the possibility of harm/abuse happening in the lives of adults within the centre, especially when that adult might have reduced ability to protect themselves from harm.
- Seek advice about situations which cause concern. Always record concerns accurately.
- Adhere to any Code of Practice relevant and to create safe environments for those you work with.
- Consider any unexplained signs of physical injury – bruises, cuts, scratches, burns, sprains, fractures, dislocations, hair loss, missing teeth. Unexplained/long absences at regular placement. Person appears frightened, avoids a particular person.
- Demonstrates atypical new behaviour e.g. asks not to be hurt, when dealing with breach of house rules or sudden change from usual behaviour.
- Possible signs of financial abuse
- No control over personal funds or bank accounts, misappropriation of money, valuables or property, Unable to pay bills, refusal to spend money, insufficient monies to meet normal budget expenses, etc.

Steps to responding to a concern of abuse towards an adult at risk of harm.

IPAS recommend that all staff in the centre be aware of and be able to identify indicators of abuse. All residents need to be able to communicate their wishes in relation to how a concern is dealt with. The promotion of peoples' rights is central to this policy. The centre manager must be clear that any concerns that may be criminal in nature have to be reported to An Garda Síochána.

Staff can become aware of potential concerns of abuse through the following:

- Direct observation of an incident of abuse
- Disclosure by the adult themselves
- Disclosure by a relative/friend
- Observation of signs or symptoms of abuse
- Anonymous reporting
- Concerns raised through a complaint process or other form of engagement with the resident.

The following is in line with current best practice and aligned to HSE policy:

- **Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.**
- **Everyone must have a zero-tolerance approach to any form of abuse.**
- **The duty to report safeguarding concerns rests with the person who has the concern.**
- **There should be no delay in reporting a safeguarding concern.**
- **It is necessary to ensure the immediate safety of the adult at risk of abuse.**

Steps to be taken on the **same day** when concerns come to light:

The following are key responsibilities and actions for any worker who has a concern in relation to the abuse or neglect of an adult at risk of abuse.

1. Take Immediate Action to Protect the resident

Take any immediate actions to safeguard anyone at immediate risk of harm including seeking, for example, emergency medical assistance or the assistance of An Garda Síochána, as appropriate. This can also include making sure the resident is in a safe part of the centre.

2. Listen, Reassure and Support

If the adult at risk of harm makes a direct disclosure and is upset and distressed about an incident, listen to what he/she says and ensure he/she is given the support needed. Find a quiet calm area to talk to the resident. It is important to engage with the adult in their preferred communication method. Advise the adult of the concern as you understand it and always seek to ascertain their will and preference.

It is important not to:

- Appear shocked or display negative emotions.
- Press the individual for details.
- Make judgments.
- Promise to keep secrets.
- Give sweeping reassurances.
- Avoid confronting the alleged abuser instead you can discreetly check out some of the details.

3. Report to the appropriate services and Inform management

All potential criminal incidences have to be reported to An Garda Siochana immediately. These need to be accurately recorded. The incident is then reported to IPAS Helpdesk including any relevant reference numbers and dates of calls.

3 (a) In very serious incidents evidence can be preserved through accurate records and physical evidence may need to be preserved until Gardaí attend.

Reporting to TUSLA, Child and Family Agency

TUSLA must be notified if there is concern over the safety or welfare of a child in accordance with the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children. This includes if they have witnessed a potentially abusive incident towards another adult.

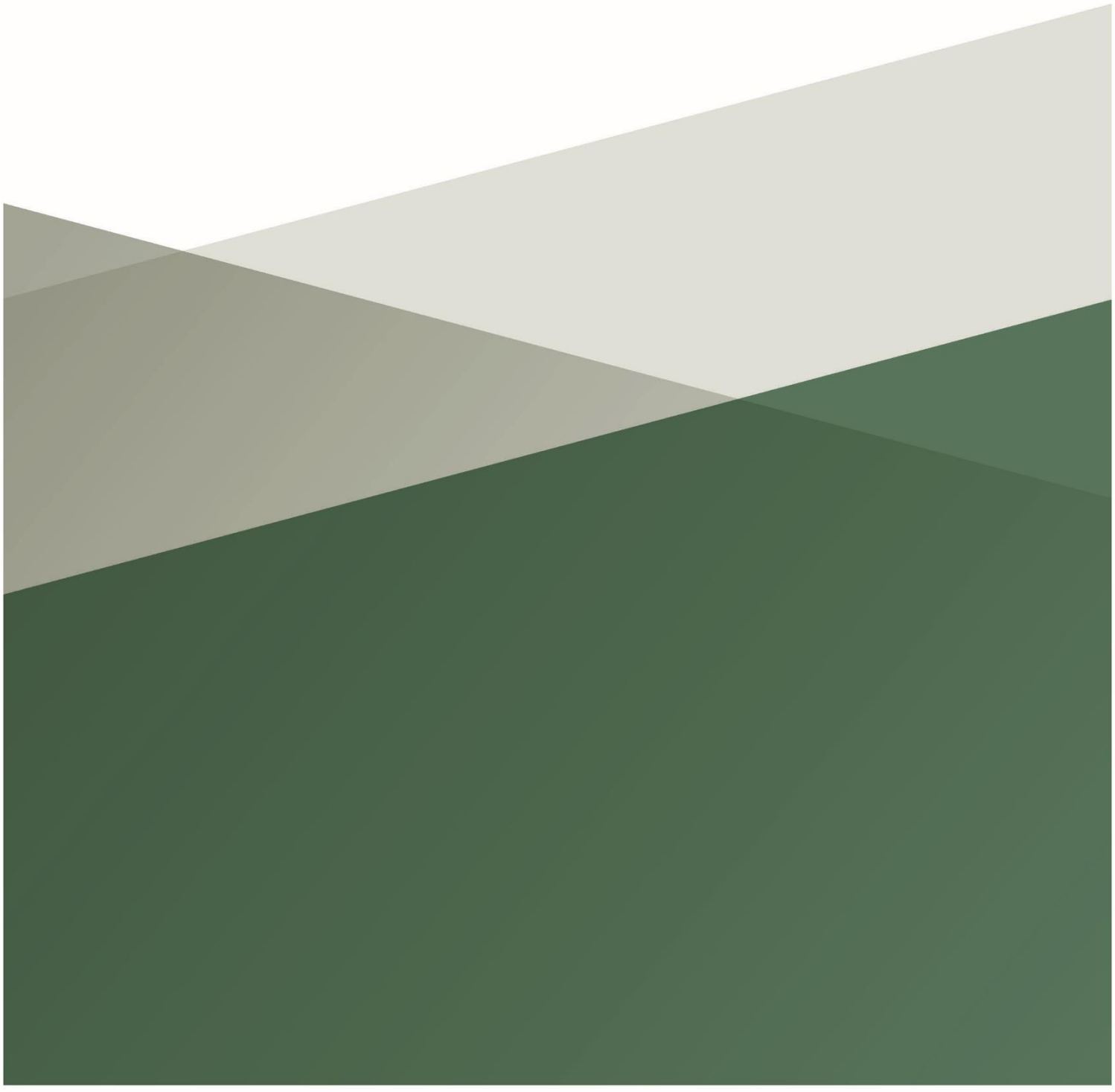
Same Day Actions

- Ensure a detailed written record of what you have seen, been told, or have concerns about, and who you reported it to.
- Where possible try to make sure anyone, else who saw or heard anything relating to the concern of abuse also makes a written report.
- Contact the emergency services when someone is displaying they are an immediate risk to their own welfare or that of others.
- Ensure there is supervision or monitoring of the person's welfare until the emergency services arrive.
- Ensure their advice is recorded and communicated with all relevant staff for continuity.
- Inform IPAS Helpdesk and include all relevant information.
- Complete a Centre specific Risk Assessment
- Please make sure all other relevant policies have been adhered to and recorded and consider outcomes of any risk assessments taken.
- Please record any referrals etc to support services.
- When necessary, develop a safeguarding folder.

Guidelines to follow when a resident discloses a concern.

- Stay calm and listen.
- Reassure the person - tell him/her they did the right thing in telling you.
- Let them know that the information will be taken seriously and give them information about what will happen next. Let them know you need to inform the IPAS Helpdesk

- If urgent medical and/or Gardaí/ help is needed, call the emergency services and preserve any forensic evidence. Link the resident in with a GP if available for ongoing support.
- Let the person know that they will be kept informed at every stage.
- Make sure relevant HSE personnel have been informed. Serious and ongoing concerns can be referred for advice to the local HSE Safeguarding Team via a community referral form.
- Record in writing (date and sign your record) and report to the DLP/ manager/ reception officer and IPAS.
- It is good practice to make time in team meeting for debriefing for staff with the opportunity to look at possible lesson to be learned for further development.
- Ensure you have recorded what steps were taken to make the resident safe.

Checklist

		Please tick all that apply
Preventative Steps	IPAS Policy and statement is well displayed	☐
	All Centre staff promote the welfare of all residents	☐
	Staff have completed HSELand E learning on adult safeguarding	☐
	Staff are aware how to identify potential incidents of concern	☐
	Complete and document a risk assessment of harm to adult at risk	☐
	Include all of the above into the induction session for new residents	☐
	Keep information of support services clearly visible in communal area	☐
	Provide a safe space for residents to communicate in confidence	☐
		☐
		☐
		☐
		☐
Role of Centre manager	Ensures all staff comply with the Centre policy	☐
	Ensures all procedures are complied with when concern is raised	☐
	Ensures staff receive proper training	☐
	Ensures safeguarding is explained during the induction	☐
	Appoint a designated person to receive and follow up concerns	☐
	Maintains records of compliance and can demonstrate how service is	☐
	Maintains record that demonstrate how Centre is responding	☐
	Ensure there is cover for relevant staff when they are off site	☐
When A Concern is raised	Ensure safety of resident	☐
	Ensure all relevant people are informed (Garda / Emergency services)	☐
	Assist with GP appointment if necessary	☐
	Have referrals to medical/ psychological supports been made	☐
	Is a referral to an advocacy agency warranted	☐
	Record **all** actions taken and set review date	☐
		☐