Responding to Initial Concerns

At times, people may raise concerns they have about a person's safety and wellbeing, but not have a clear idea of why, or have identified signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or violence. People may describe this as a worry, an unsettling feeling, or are concerned that something is not right about a situation. As part of developing a safer service culture, it is important that people feel supported to be able to raise concerns at an early stage, that there is a known process within the organisation to receive concerns of this nature, that they are documented in some way, and there is a clear decision-making process. This flowchart outlines the key steps to responding to initial concerns, along with some reflective questions.

Speak Up

Speak to your line manager, or a trusted person in the organisation who is in a position to respond to the concern. If you believe the matter is urgent you need to report it immediately in line with your organisations policies and procedures.

You could begin the process of speaking up in different ways such as:

- Email or phone the person to ask for a meeting
- Raise the concern in a support and supervision session
- Raise the concern at a team meeting, if appropriate

Explore and Safeguard

Collaboratively explore why the concerns may be present, and what this may mean for the person whose safety may be at risk. Together, think about whether any preventative safeguards could be put into place.

You could explore together by thinking through:

- What have you seen / heard / witnessed?
- What has changed, and when did this come to your attention?
- How could we find out more about this?
- Are there any actions we can take now that will help to make the situation safer?

A record of the concern, exploration, and actions should be maintained. Depending on your organisation's systems, this could be in a case note, record of conversation, other documentation, or the Responding to Initial Concerns—Form.

Seek Evidence/ Substantiation

A team leader or manager will have to identify what might be needed to substantiate or provide evidence that something has occurred.

Some ways of seeking the information required could include:

- Speaking to the person that we are concerned about
- Asking the wider support team, together or individually, about whether they have any safeguarding concerns
- Use this flowchart so that supporters understand the process for raising concerns
- Reviewing relevant documentation and records. For example: file notes, incident reports and health recording charts
- All evidence collected will contribute to informed decision making.

No Evidence or Objective Information

When there is no further evidence or objective information to help clarify whether there is still a safety concern, it is important to remember:

- To follow up and enact any safeguards that were identified
- To speak up again if this concern or any others are identified
- To complete the feedback loop—all parties involved in raising the concern should know why the concerns have not progressed further
- To record the concerns and actions somewhere, in case it is relevant in the future

Raise Awareness

Raise awareness of the concern, as part of safeguarding. This could involve

- Speaking to the person being supported, and identifying any protective measures
- Meeting to discuss with the person's support team
- Highlighting benefits of an open culture of reporting concerns

Individual Safeguarding

Consider holding an Individual Safeguarding Meeting with the person and their key supporters. The Individual Safeguarding Meeting Kit can be used, or an alternate process. It is important that the meeting outcomes include an assessment of risks, clear actions, and people responsible for these.

Serious Concerns are Raised

When there is evidence or serious concerns raised about a person's safety, an investigation will be required. For example, someone saying they witnessed an assault of a person with disability in their home. See the Safer Services Investigations Workbook or relevant policies and procedures of your organisation to find out more about the process for this.