



Opus Guide to Safeguarding Issues with Medicines for Care Homes





Safeguarding Issues with Medicines for Care Homes

Following the release of the new [NICE guideline \(NG189\) in February 2021 - Safeguarding Adults in Care Homes](#) - the following provides a useful overview to discuss with staff.



Challenges

- 1 Knowing what constitutes a safeguarding issue with medicines
- 2 Understanding the difference between safeguarding issues with medicines and poor practice
- 3 Making sure the culture in your care home increases awareness of safeguarding and ensures staff can report concerns when needed
- 4 Knowing when and how to make safeguarding referrals to the Local Authority
- 5 Learning from your experiences of managing safeguarding concerns



What constitutes a safeguarding issue with medicines?

The NICE guideline “Managing Medicines in Care Homes” states - this could include:

- ➔ The deliberate withholding of a medicine without a valid reason
- ➔ The incorrect use of a medicine for reasons other than for the benefit of a resident
- ➔ Deliberate attempt to harm through use of a medicine
- ➔ Accidental harm caused by incorrect administration or a medication error



Discussions with Staff

It is important to discuss with staff the difference between poor practice (which is not necessarily a safeguarding issue) and neglect or abuse (which **is** a safeguarding issue).

Before we look at neglect or abuse with medicines, we need to explain the language we use.



If you **consider** abuse or neglect - this means this is one possible explanation.



If you **suspect** abuse or neglect - this means you have a serious level of concern about the possibility of abuse or neglect.



What is neglect or abuse with medicines?

Neglect

If you **consider neglect**, this might include:

- ➔ A resident who doesn't have access to medical treatment
- ➔ A resident who has not received their prescribed medicines
- ➔ A resident whose medicines have been administered incorrectly
 - Wrong medicine
 - Wrong dose
 - Wrong time
 - Wrong route



Neglect

If you **suspect neglect**, this might include:

- A resident who repeatedly does not receive their prescribed medicines
- A resident who repeatedly has their medicines administered incorrectly

Be aware that some indicators of neglect may result from self-neglect.

Physical Abuse

If you **consider physical abuse**, this might include:

- A resident who tells you or shows you signs they are in pain and the cause is unexplained (e.g. not caused by a pre-existing medical condition)

If you **suspect physical abuse**, this might include:

- A resident who has their activity limited by misuse of medicines
- A resident whose medicines are administered covertly when not medically authorised

Organisational Abuse

Organisational abuse could include:

- Evidence of poor medicines management
- Excessive use of “when required” PRN medicines
- Poor records
- Overuse of restrictive practices including misuse of medicines e.g. antipsychotics, sleeping tablets



Actions to Take in Your Care Home

1

Make sure staff are familiar with your safeguarding policy and know what action to take if they consider or suspect abuse (the process should be documented in your safeguarding policy)

2

Make sure staff know who the safeguarding lead is in your care home and make sure the process for making a safeguarding referral to the Local Authority is clear

3

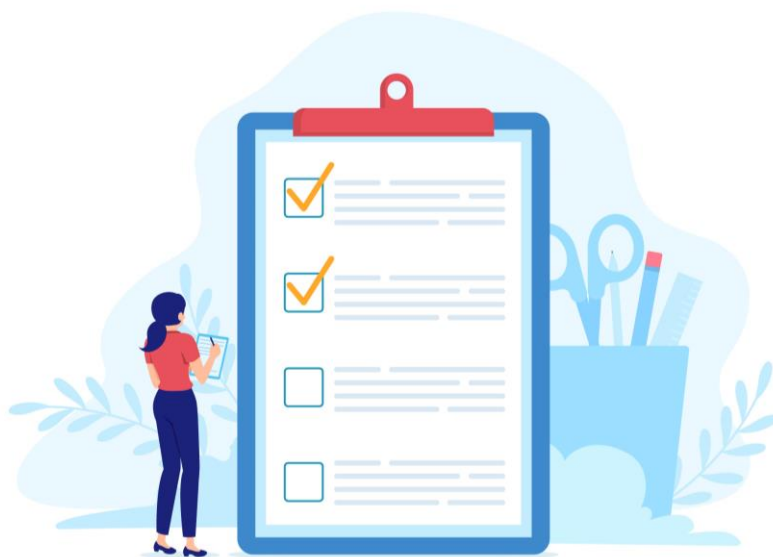
Appoint a safeguarding champion

4

Make sure your staff and managers are fully [medicines-trained](#) so that poor practice is eliminated

5

Make sure you [learn from safeguarding concerns and adopt reflective practice](#)





How can we learn from safeguarding concerns?

1

Incorporate [learning](#) into the culture of your care home

2

[Support and supervise staff](#)

3

[Re-train](#) and performance manage staff

4

Observe practice and [competency assess](#)

5

Make sure [your policy and processes](#) are clear



What is reflective practice?



Reflect on previous practice



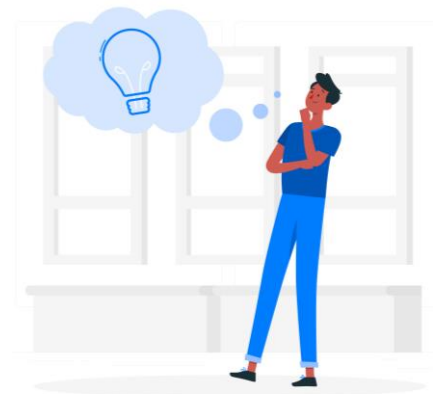
Talk about why staff made the decisions they did and why they acted in that particular way



Talk about emotional responses to their actions and the actions of others



Engage in continuous learning








Continuous Learning from OPUS

- 1 [Safe Handling of Medicines Foundation](#)
- 2 [Online foundation and advanced competency assessments](#)
- 3 [Medication Management and Audit virtual learning sessions](#)
- 4 [Assessors Workshop for Medicines Handling virtual learning sessions](#)
- 5 Courses about specific medicines e.g. [warfarin](#), [Controlled Drugs](#), [buccal midazolam](#)
- 6 Courses about specific conditions and their treatments e.g. [depression](#), [Parkinson's Disease](#), [schizophrenia](#)

For more information about the courses available from OPUS, contact one of our friendly team:

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