

## SAFEGUARDING ADULTS WEEK 2021

### Emotional Abuse & Safeguarding Mental Health

Emotional abuse can have a devastating impact on mental as well as physical health. To have safer cultures, we need to prioritise wellbeing, and create a culture where people can speak out, be listened to and respected. At an individual level this can mean supporting people to recognise the importance of wellbeing and self-care. At an organisational level, it is about promoting respectful cultures where people can speak out without fear of reprimand.

#### What is Emotional Abuse?

- Threats of harm or abandonment.
- Deprivation of contact or refusal of visitors.
- Restricting personal choice and refusing to respect privacy.
- Blaming, controlling, or intimidating behaviour.
- Coercion and harassment.
- Humiliation, verbal abuse, or the use of infantilising language
- Removing mobility/communication aids, or intentionally leaving someone unattended when they need assistance.

Cyber bullying is another example of emotional abuse. [Read Ann Craft Trust guide to cyber bullying here.](#)

#### Spotting the signs of Emotional Abuse

Signs of emotional abuse are not always easy to spot but the following could indicate that a person is being subjected to emotional abuse:-

- An air of silence or discomfort when a particular person is present.
- Withdrawal, or a change in the psychological state of the person.
- A change of appetite, or unexplained weight loss or gain.
- Distress including tears and anger

#### What is the impact of Emotional abuse?

The signs of emotional abuse are not as easy to see as those of physical abuse, but the effect of the abuse can be just as severe. The long term effects of emotional abuse can include:-

- Depression,
- Low self-esteem
- Suicidal thoughts or intentions
- Insomnia
- Withdrawal and inability to trust people.

Substance misuse can be another effect of psychological abuse, individuals exposed to emotional abuse may adopt unhealthy coping mechanisms including excessive drinking or drug misuse and eventually, these coping mechanisms can contribute to disease, disability, and social problems, as well as premature mortality.

## How can we safeguard Mental Health and reduce Emotional Abuse?

Develop supportive environments where people feel listened to and are provided with opportunities to talk or share concerns and individuals feel confident in how to respond to and raise safeguarding concerns. See [MIND Wellness Action Plan - Guide for Managers](#).

For **organisations** this could include:-

- Policies procedures on recognising and reporting emotional abuse [Tips for Adult Policy & Procedures](#)
- Safeguarding training on emotional abuse
- Structured supervision and regular debriefing sessions for staff and volunteers
- Scheduling informal coffee breaks for staff
- Setting up a Buddy System for peer support
- Providing opportunities and promote discussions about mental health

Supporting **individuals** to take responsibility for their wellbeing is another way to help safeguard mental health. Ideas for doing this could include:-

- Promoting [Five ways to wellbeing](#)
- [Encouraging and teaching individuals to ask for help](#)
- Encourage people to assess their own wellbeing in work. See [Mind - Guide to Wellness Action Plans](#)

## What to do if you are concerned about emotional abuse?

If you are worried that a vulnerable adult has, or is suffering harm, neglect or abuse? Please call 0300 303 8886 to report your concerns, or email [adult.care@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:adult.care@rochdale.gov.uk)

If you are concerned about emotional abuse in an organisation where you work or volunteer then click this link for further information about where to go for advice [Rochdale Safeguarding Board Allegations Management Information](#)