

# Protection of Vulnerable Adults

## Introduction

This module reviews the legislation and practicalities around protecting vulnerable adults, which are now referred to as potential adults at risk. An adult at risk is a person over the age of 16 who is unable to safeguard their own interests and are at risk of harm because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity<sup>1</sup>.

The module recognises that safeguarding is often challenging in practice and looks for solutions in collaborative working with families, carers, other agencies including social work and adult protection services, and with vulnerable adults themselves. In this module the term “harm” will be used, in place of abuse, in line with current legislation and procedures unless directly quoting from sources using the term abuse. The term harm has the same meaning as abuse in this module.

The module raises issues that should be of interest to all healthcare professionals especially GPNs, GPs, ANPs, pharmacists and professions aligned to medicine such as advanced practice physiotherapists.

It is worth noting that the legislation around safeguarding and capacity is different between the four nations in the UK. Legislation referred to within the module largely represents the Scottish context but makes reference to UK guidance too.

Other PBSGL modules cover these associated topics in more depth and do not form the focus of this module:

- Cervical screening: a primary care concern [published February 2021],
- Autism in Adults [published September 2020],
- Psychiatry short cases [published December 2019].

### Learning outcomes:

Following reading and discussion of this module the individual should:

- Understand what is meant by the term “adult at risk”
- Understand the different forms that harm can take
- Be able to recognise the common signs of harm or neglect
- Know how to manage concerns about vulnerable adults in different settings
- Understand the legal frameworks relating to identification and support of vulnerable adults
- Know how to identify those at risk with a focus on older adults, adults with learning disabilities and asylum seekers
- Know which agencies can help with concerns about vulnerable adults and when to ask for help/input from agencies
- Have revisited the issue of confidentiality in the context of concerns about a vulnerable adult