



Focus groups about keeping people safe when they use health services

Easy Read Report

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Foreword

As the Minister for Health, I want to say thanks very much to each of you who shared your thoughts with us for this report. Thanks too to everyone else who helped us.

My Department and the organisations that work with us are all trying to get better at keeping adults who use our health and care services as safe as we can. This important report is about what our service users think about that. We have to listen to you and pay attention to what you say so that we can have better rules, laws and services.

It is really important for all of us to take care of each other, especially anyone who might sometimes be at risk of harm. These could be our neighbours, friends, family or ourselves. We all deserve a chance to live a happy life and to be safe. This is even more important in the difficult times we've all been going through recently.

This is why my Department is writing new rules and laws about adult safeguarding. We will try to make sure that people who use our services can make their own decisions for their own lives and we will try at the same time to keep people safe from harm. You've helped us to be better at doing this really important job because you've told us about your experiences and your thoughts. Thanks again.



**Stephen Donnelly T.D.,
Minister for Health**

What is this report about?



An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health

The Department of Health wants to design new rules about keeping people safe when they use health services. This is called safeguarding.

Institute of
Public Health



The Department asked the Institute of Public Health to talk to people about their ideas on how to keep people safe. The Institute of Public Health is an organisation that does research.



The Institute of Public Health asked lots of different people to come to meetings to talk about their ideas on how to keep people safe.

These type of meetings are called focus groups. This report is what people said at the focus groups.

How we carried out these focus groups



We held 12 focus groups at different places around Ireland. A total of 82 people took part.

Some of the focus groups were with people with intellectual disabilities.



Some were with people with dementia or brain injuries.



Some were with people who live in nursing homes.



Some were with people with mental health challenges.

The youngest person was aged 23 and the oldest was 97. There were more women than men in the focus groups.



Everybody who took part signed a consent form to say they agreed to take part after we explained the research to them.



We asked people questions and listened to their answers.

We recorded the meetings and wrote down what people said later.



We took everybody's name out of the report and kept their identity a secret.

What people told us

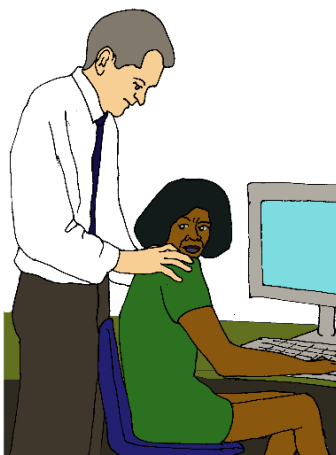
Question 1: What kind of behaviours do you think are harmful?

We discussed different types of behaviour that can be harmful.

We heard that:



Physical abuse can include hitting, pulling hair and rough treatment. It can be by a stranger or by someone you know.



Sexual abuse includes rape, inappropriate touching and harassment.

“They go and they get money, they get something small, and they keep the rest for themselves,”
Woman, nursing home sector

“Physical stuff we can all see, and other people can witness it, but the emotional abuse isn’t always evident.” **Woman, mental health group**



Isolation or neglect is a type of harm where people’s needs aren’t looked after properly.



Emotional abuse includes calling people names, shouting at them and being mean.



It is a type of harm when someone doesn't listen to your preferences about food or medicine.



Financial abuse is when someone takes your money or won't let you decide how to spend it.



Online abuse includes financial scams, making nasty comments and pretending to be someone else online.

Question 2: If you were being harmed by someone who would you tell?



Everyone agreed it is really important to tell somebody if you are being harmed. We heard that if they were being harmed:

Some people would tell a family member or friend.



Some would tell their doctor or a nurse or social worker.



Some would tell the gardaí.

Some said they would tell a person in their community like a priest or a shopkeeper.

“You have to know where to go, where do you go with it. None of us know where to go if you’ve a problem.” **Man, Acquired brain injury group**



Some said they would look on the Internet for advice on how to get help.



Many people said they would be unsure who to tell if someone in their family was harming them.

Question 3: What would you like a person to do?



We heard that:

People wanted the harmful behaviour to stop.



They wanted the person they told to investigate the matter and help find a solution.



Sometimes a person just needed to be warned not to do something.

But sometimes a punishment was needed if they had done something really bad.



Some people thought that a staff person who was harming someone should be sacked from their job.



Some people did not want anyone to know they had made a complaint about someone in case that person was angry with them.



Some people wanted an independent organisation to carry out investigations about harm.

Question 4: Would you like to be asked about what should happen?

We heard:



Most people wanted to know what happened after they made a complaint.



Many people wanted to be asked about what should happen – especially if they lived at home or it affected their care.



Some people thought that the service doing the investigation should decide what to do if someone had something wrong.

“I think in general doctors will have the conversation as to what a person wants, I would hope...” **Woman, dementia group**

“They have to tell the boss, and explain what happened and then the boss can decide. Sack them or not sack them.”
Woman, ID group

Question 5: What is the best way to keep people safe?

“When you’ve no power... And like I can’t walk. And I notice, I’ve lots of friends, I’m lucky, people are kind but it’s just luck. I really think power is so important.” **Woman, nursing home group**

“Make sure that there's always somebody that's verbal in case when people are not able to talk... And pictures.” **Woman, ID group**



People had lots of ideas on the best way to keep people safe.

We heard:

It is very important to listen carefully to what people say and find ways to communicate with them if they have difficulty speaking.

Many said it would be good to give people more say in how health services are run.



Some said it would be good to have suggestion boxes in health services so that people can give their ideas for making things better.



It would be good to have residents' committees in nursing homes and patient committees in health services where people can discuss problems or suggest new ideas.



It is also very important that information on getting help is up to date and easy to find and understand.



Lots of people said it is very important that staff and carers are well trained and have plenty of time and support to do their job well.

“I think if I could go back to the Department of Health today with one message, I would say would you please train your staff.” **Woman, dementia group**

“They could have a suggestion box in every single place, in every single ward, a suggestion box that is followed up on...” **Woman, mental health group**

“I’d like to see advertising in the paper to say to everyone out there, if you have somebody in a home go and visit them, it’s very important...because our day is 24 hours, you know. And there’s a lot of minutes in those 24 hours...” **Man, nursing home group**

Conclusion: What happens next?



The Department of Health will read about people's views in this report and in a longer version we gave them.



They will write new rules about adult safeguarding based on what you and other people said.



They would like to show people these new rules and see if they agree with them before they make them final.



If you would like further information about this report please email Aideen Sheehan in the Institute of Public Health.

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If you would like further information on safeguarding policy please email the Department of Health.

HealthSafeguardingPolicy@health.gov.ie

Thank you to everyone who took part in the focus groups. It was really nice to meet you and get your opinions.



thank you

Thank you to all the organisations who helped us find people to take part.

- The Federation of Voluntary Service Providers (intellectual disability)
- The Alzheimer Society of Ireland and the Irish Dementia Working Group
- Acquired Brain Injury Ireland
- HSE Mental Health Engagement Offices
- Sage Advocacy (nursing homes)

Thank you to the smaller organisations which also helped. We haven't written their names to protect people's privacy.

Thank you also to Department of Health officials, the Ethics Committee, The Intellectual Disability Supplement to the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (IDS-TILDA) and the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities for their expert insights.





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