



**What is abuse and what can I do about it?**

# **Easy Read Leaflet for people with a learning disability**

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**Learning Disability Wales**  
**Anabledd Dysgu Cymru**



**Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru**  
**Welsh Assembly Government**



**mencap cymru**  
Llais anabledd dysgu  
The voice of learning disability

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## What is abuse?

Abuse is the word we use when someone does **bad things to us or hurts us.**

You have the same rights as anybody else. Abuse goes against **your rights.**

Abuse can happen **once or many times.**



**Abuse can happen anywhere.** This can be where we live, where we spend our day or in a public place like a shopping centre or bus stop.

**All sorts of people can abuse us.** They can be important people, like social workers or doctors. They can be strangers. They can be people who work with other service users or those who help us. Even people in our family can abuse us.

**Abuse may result in harm.**

*Remember.* **Abuse is always wrong. It is never your fault.**

Sometimes abuse can be against the law.

If you are abused, **you may feel frightened, unhappy, angry or confused.**

You may feel scared to speak up or stop the person doing bad things.



The **person may tell you it is a secret**, or that they will hurt you if you speak up.



## What abuse is *not*

Sometimes things happen to all of us that we do not like.

Sometimes we cannot have our own way.

Sometimes we get hurt by accident.

Sometimes we have arguments.

These are not abuse. **Abuse is worse than these things.**



## How do I know if it is abuse?

There are five types of abuse.

1. Physical abuse
2. Sexual abuse
3. Neglect
4. Emotional abuse
5. Financial abuse

These are looked at in more detail below.

### 1. Physical Abuse

**Physical abuse is when somebody does something on purpose to hurt you and it results in pain or suffering.**



Physical abuse can be when:

- someone hits you
- punches you
- burns you
- kicks you
- someone holds you down
- pulls your hair
- punishes you by locking you in a room



## 2. Sexual Abuse

**Sexual Abuse is when you do not consent to taking part in a sexual activity.**

**Sexual abuse may happen even when you have said no.**

**Sexual abuse may happen if you are not able to give your consent because you do not understand what is happening.**



“Consent” means saying ‘yes’. You can only give consent if you understand what sex is and you want to do something sexual with that person.

Sometimes you may be scared to say “no” to someone who has power over you. This may be because they are bigger and stronger or tell you what to do. It is still abuse and it is still the other person’s fault.

Men and women can sexually abuse people they know or strangers. This means we can be sexually abused by people we know or by a stranger. We can be sexually abused by a man or a woman.

It is always sexual abuse if a support worker or paid carer does something sexual with you.

Sexual things include:

- Taking photos of you naked – without your clothes on
- Looking at pornography in magazines, films or the internet
- Touching private parts
- Watching sex
- Sex

**These are sexual abuse if you do not give your permission and you do not want them to happen.**



### 3. Neglect

**Neglect includes ignoring your care needs or deliberately not providing care.**

**Neglect is when the people who you rely on you to help you don't help you.**

- Sometimes neglect is because the person you rely on is not able to look after you.
- Sometimes neglect is because they choose not to look after you.
- This may result in someone looking untidy, unbrushed hair, dirty clothes and not being given food.
- This may result in an untreated medical condition
- This may result in poor living surroundings compared to others

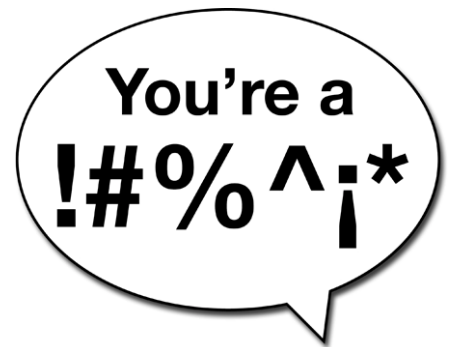


### 4. Emotional

**Emotional abuse is when people say bad things to you and they hurt your feelings, they make you feel frightened and humiliated.**

This can include:

- Bullying and name calling
- Shouting and swearing
- Insulting you and humiliating you
- Threatening you
- Not meeting your support needs
- Restricting or preventing social contact with relatives
- Carer preventing social worker visiting



## 5. Financial

**Financial abuse is when someone takes your money or things without asking you.**

**Financial abuse is when you do not have a say in how you or someone else spends your money**

Financial abuse includes:

- Theft of money and things you own
- Misuse of money ie buying things using your money that you don't want or it is really for them
- Not giving money for things you really need
- Not paying bills for you
- Not giving you money when you need it
- Deception
- Taking out loans in your name



## Who abuses people?

All sorts of people can abuse us. They can be people who are usually respected, like social workers or doctors. They can be strangers. They can be people who work with other service users or those who help us. Even people in our family can abuse us.

We cannot spot an abuser by what they wear or what they look like. Someone can look nice and abuse people, or look scary and be kind to people.

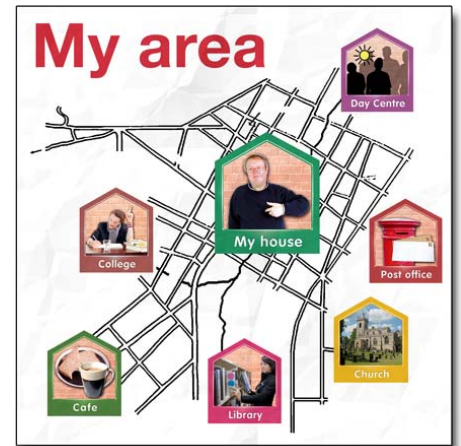


Most of us who have been abused were abused by people we knew.

## Where does abuse happen?

We need to keep ourselves safe wherever we are. This is because abuse can happen anywhere. It can happen

- Where we live
- Where we work
- In the community
- At the doctors
- In hospital
- At school or college



When we know how to keep ourselves safe, we do not need to be scared all the time.

We can keep ourselves safe by:

- Speaking up if we are unhappy – people who speak up are less likely to be abused
- Having people we trust – abuse is easier when people are on their own
- Having information about what is abuse and what to do
- Having support from user groups where we can talk about things that concern us
- Having an advocate who can speak up on our behalf
- Taking part in decisions that affect our lives



## Help! Someone I know is being abused

You can help to stop the abuse. You can tell someone you trust about it. You can help the person to speak up for themselves. Some people cannot speak. You can speak up for them.

You may feel scared and helpless when a friend is being abused. Ask someone you trust to help you to understand how you feel.





## Help! I am being abused

You do not have to put up with abuse. You can do something to make it stop.

You can tell a social worker or the police. They will help you. They can make sure you stop being abused.



### **“But I am scared to speak up”**

It is hard to speak up about abuse.  
The person abusing you knows this.  
They want to make you scared to speak up.

You can get help from a friend or someone you trust.  
You can phone a helpline.

Whatever the person abusing you says, you do NOT have to keep a secret.

It is safe to speak up to social services or the police. They have a duty to help keep you safe.



## Help! I am abusing someone

Some people with a learning disability abuse other people.

If you abuse other people, you need to get help to stop.

Tell someone you trust, and ask them for help.

Abuse is bad. With help, you can stop doing it.

If you have broken the law, you may have to talk to the police.



## Organisations who produced this leaflet and DVD

This leaflet and DVD was made possible by funding from Welsh Assembly Government.

The organisations who worked in partnership to produce this leaflet and DVD are:

**All Wales People First** is the united voice of self-advocacy groups and all people with learning disabilities in Wales. It shares knowledge and information to achieve equal rights and a positive image. All Wales People First, Stebonheath Centre, Stebonheath Terrace, Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, SA15 1NE. Telephone: 01554 784905

**Learning Disability Wales** mission is to create a Wales that values and includes every child and adult with a learning disability. They work in partnership with other organisations, service users and parents/carers. They campaign to help children and adults with learning disabilities achieve valued lives. They support the voluntary sector and its interests. They provide and promote good practice. Learning Disability Wales, 41 Lambourne Crescent, Cardiff Business Park, Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5GG. Tel 029 2068 1160. [www.learningdisabilitywales.org.uk](http://www.learningdisabilitywales.org.uk)

**Mencap Cymru** works with people with a learning disability to change laws and services, challenge prejudice and directly support thousands of people to live their lives as they choose. Mencap Cymru, 31 Lambourne Crescent, Cardiff Business Park, Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5GF. Tel 029 2074 7588. [www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

**Caerphilly Social Services**, Hawtin Park, Gellihaf, Blackwood, NP12 2PZ. Tel 01443 864653. [www.caerphilly.gov.uk](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk)

**Social Interface.** The organisations asked **Social Interface** to help them make this DVD. Social Interface, Mentec, Ffordd Deiniol, Bangor, LL57 2UP. Tel 01248 361483, email [anne@socialinterface.co.uk](mailto:anne@socialinterface.co.uk), [www.socialinterface.co.uk](http://www.socialinterface.co.uk)

## Useful Contacts

**The Wales Learning Disability Helpline, Telephone: 0808 8000 300, Email:** [information.wales@mencap.org.uk](mailto:information.wales@mencap.org.uk). 10am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 10am to 4pm on weekends and bank holidays.

**Ann Craft Trust:** <http://www.anncrafttrust.org/>

They work with organizations to protect people with learning disabilities who may be at risk from abuse. They also provide advice and information to parents and carers who may have concerns about someone that they are supporting.

**VOICE** <http://www.voiceuk.org.uk/> Telephone helpline 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday:  
**Telephone 0845 122 8695**

They are a national charity supporting people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable people who have experienced crime or abuse. They also support their families, carers and professional workers.

**Respond:** <http://www.respond.org.uk/>

Respond provides a range of services to both victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse who have learning disabilities and those who have been affected by other trauma. Their services extend to support and training for families, carers and professionals.

**Criminal Records Bureau:** <http://www.pavpub.com/pavpub/home/index.asp>

The CRB's aim is to help organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors by identifying candidates who may be unsuitable to work with children or other vulnerable members of society.

**Stop Hate UK** <http://www.stophateuk.org/> **24 hour helpline 0800 138 1625.**

Raising awareness and understanding of discrimination and hate crime, encouraging its reporting, and supporting the individuals and communities it affects.