

Plain English Glossary

What are the important words for new adult safeguarding laws?

This document contains a table that explains some of the words we use in:

- the plain English summary of our Report on a regulatory framework for adult safeguarding in Ireland; and
- our plain English Report on a regulatory framework for adult safeguarding in Ireland.

We explain each word, focusing on its meaning for new adult safeguarding laws. Don't worry, you don't have to memorise each word. You can always flick back here to find the meaning of a word when you are reading the other documents.

We know that some people find terms like "mental disorder" or "autism spectrum disorder" offensive. The Commission thought hard about what terms should be used. However, we need to use precise terms for the criminal law. These terms are used in laws and court cases. The National Disability Authority also said in a recent document that sometimes "medical language" needs to be used in laws. So, we use these terms in our documents.

The table of words to know starts on the next page.

Words to know	Meaning
<p>Abuse</p>	<p>Actions that harm people. These actions can be physical or mental.</p> <p>Examples of abuse are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical violence; • lying to make a gain or cause a loss to someone; • using words or doing things to hurt someone or make them feel unsafe; • insulting, threatening or intimidating someone; and • pestering, spying on or stalking someone.
<p>Accountability</p>	<p>People taking responsibility for their actions and being open and honest if something goes wrong. Accountability in adult safeguarding makes sure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actions taken to keep at-risk adults safe are clear and everyone knows what is required of them; • health and social care services and other agencies are responsible for their actions and can explain how they protect at-risk adults; • service providers are open and honest about how they handle safeguarding issues; and • there are proper systems for managing risks, sharing information and reporting.

Words to know	Meaning
<p>Adult at risk of harm, or at-risk adult</p>	<p>An adult who, because of their physical or mental health, personal traits or life situation, needs help to keep themselves safe from harm at a particular time.</p>
<p>Adult safeguarding review</p>	<p>Reviews that are used when an at-risk adult is seriously harmed or dies because of abuse or neglect.</p> <p>The purpose of an adult safeguarding review is to find out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what happened; • how it happened; and • what can be done differently to stop it happening again.
<p>Advocate</p>	<p>A person who supports and argues on behalf of another person.</p>
<p>Anti-social behaviour</p>	<p>Unfriendly or criminal behaviour.</p>
<p>Approved centre</p>	<p>A residential centre for people with mental disorders, where people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stay; and • receive care, support and treatment. <p>Approved centres are regulated by the Mental Health Commission.</p>

Words to know	Meaning
Assault	Touching a person without their consent or making threats to touch a person without their consent.
Authorised officers	Staff members of the Safeguarding Body who are allowed to exercise the powers of the Safeguarding Body.
Barred list	A database that has information about people who are not allowed to work in jobs related to children or at-risk adults because of their past behaviour or previous criminal convictions.
Barring order	<p>An order made by a court that stops abusive behaviour by banning someone from contacting another person. Barring orders can only apply to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • husbands, • wives, • civil partners, • adult children or • romantic partners (or former romantic partners) that live with the person who needs to be protected.

Words to know	Meaning
<p>Capacity</p> <p>(The following definition of capacity has the same meaning it does in the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015.)</p>	<p>A person’s ability to understand the nature and consequences of making a decision at the time when they make the decision.</p> <p>A person does not have “capacity” to make a decision when they cannot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand information relevant to the decision; • remember the information; • use the information when making the decision; or • communicate their decision.
<p>Child and Family Agency</p>	<p>The official name of the government agency commonly called “Tusla”. The Child and Family Agency is an independent body that is responsible for supporting and promoting the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development, • well-being, and • protection <p>of children in Ireland.</p>
<p>Code of practice</p>	<p>A set of rules or standards made by an organisation that its members, or people who work for it, must follow.</p>
<p>Coercion</p>	<p>Using violence or intimidation to force someone to do something.</p>

Words to know	Meaning
Coercive control	Psychological and emotional abuse that makes someone feel trapped or afraid. We recommend that a new crime of coercive control against a relevant person should be introduced in Ireland.
Coercive exploitation	<p>A new crime that we recommend should be introduced in Ireland. This crime would happen when someone uses controlling or coercive behaviour to access or control a relevant person's property or money:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for their own advantage; or • the advantage of someone else.
Conflict of interest	When someone is too involved in a situation to make a fair decision about it.
Constitution	<p>The Constitution is a special legal document in Ireland that sets out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the rights that people have; and • how the government and the courts work. <p>It can only be changed by a referendum (a public vote).</p>

Words to know	Meaning
Constitutional right	Rights that are protected by the Constitution. The government can only interfere with these rights in certain circumstances. We explain this in chapter 4.
Consultees	People who shared their thoughts and experiences with us, to help us with this Report.
Cross-sectoral	When rules or laws apply to different areas of life and services, instead of just applying to one area. When we talk about adult-safeguarding laws being cross-sectoral, we mean that they should apply to all sectors and not just to the health and social care areas, for example.
Cruelty	A term used in Irish law to describe different types of abuse of children. For example, assaulting, neglecting or abandoning a child.
Deception	A crime in Ireland. This happens when someone gains something or causes someone to lose something by lying.
Decision support	A service that the Director of the Decision Support Service oversees, that helps people who do not have capacity to make a decision for themselves.

Words to know	Meaning
Designated centre	<p>Residential centres for older people and adults with disabilities. Adults, who may be at-risk adults, live in these places and may receive care, support or services there.</p> <p>Designated centres are regulated by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA).</p>
Disclosure	<p>When someone tells another person all the information that they need to know or that they ask for.</p> <p>In Garda vetting, disclosure is the part of the vetting process where the information that is found is passed on to the potential employer.</p>
Dwelling	<p>A person's private home, that is specially protected under the Constitution.</p>
Endangerment	<p>Putting someone in danger.</p>
European Convention on Human Rights	<p>An international convention, signed by lots of different countries, that protects people's rights.</p> <p>This is part of Irish law, although it does not protect rights as strongly as the Constitution.</p>

Words to know	Meaning
<p>Financial abuse</p>	<p>An action that harms someone and affects their money or property. Examples of financial abuse are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stealing someone’s property; • lying to someone to make a profit or to cause someone to make a loss, and • taking advantage of someone or treating them unfairly to get a financial benefit. <p>Financial abuse is a very common type of abuse reported by at-risk adults.</p>
<p>Functions</p>	<p>The jobs that a body sets out to do. For some bodies that are created under a law, their functions are written down in the law.</p>
<p>Garda custody</p>	<p>Being kept somewhere by the Gardaí, for example in a Garda station.</p>
<p>Garda vetting</p>	<p>A type of background check where the Gardaí find out if a person has any criminal history or if there is any worrying information about them. Garda vetting is required when someone wants to work with at-risk adults.</p>

Words to know	Meaning
<p>Health and social care services</p>	<p>Services that are provided to people in settings such as hospitals, residential centres, day centres and in their homes.</p> <p>Health and social care services can be provided by lots of different people and organisations, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the HSE; • private companies; • charities; and • individuals.
<p>Ill-treatment</p>	<p>When one person treats another person badly, or in a way that is humiliating.</p>
<p>Independent advocacy</p>	<p>When a person who is not related to an adult, or providing an adult with a service, supports an adult to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand difficult situations or information; • express their wishes and views; • make decisions about their lives; or • deal with public bodies, agencies, services or service providers.

Words to know	Meaning
	<p>Independent advocates cannot make decisions for someone else, but they can help adults (including at-risk adults) to have their voices heard when a decision is being made about them.</p>
<p>Independent body or independent organisation</p>	<p>A body or organisation that is not influenced or controlled by any other body or organisation.</p>
<p>Information sharing</p>	<p>Allowing organisations or public agencies to share information with each other. There are special laws about this.</p> <p>We think information sharing could be done to prevent harm to the health, safety, and well-being of at-risk adults.</p>
<p>Inherent jurisdiction</p>	<p>A special power that only the High Court can use. The High Court will only use this power when there are no laws that apply to a situation, but it is necessary to do something to protect a person's rights.</p>
<p>Integration</p>	<p>In the context of our Report, this means different agencies and services working together to prevent harm to at-risk adults.</p> <p>This involves making sure that:</p>

Words to know	Meaning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agencies and services work together to stop harm and to address safeguarding concerns; and • practice, policies and laws are consistent between different services and areas.
Intentional(ly)	To do something on purpose.
International protection	International protection is a type of asylum. This means that a person who has come to Ireland is allowed to stay here, because their home country is unsafe.
Interventions	<p>Serious actions that may be taken by the Safeguarding Body or the Gardaí to improve a situation and protect an at-risk adult’s rights. These interventions could also interfere with the rights of at-risk adults, their family members and other people. Because of this, permission for an intervention is usually given by a court.</p> <p>These interventions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • entering homes and places where at-risk adults live, • moving them to a safe place, or • preventing someone from contacting them.

Words to know	Meaning
<p>Harm (in civil law – this is used for many of the other definitions in the non-criminal adult safeguarding law, including in the context of “adult at risk of harm”)</p>	<p>“Harm” has a different meaning in our suggested civil law and our suggested criminal law. In the civil law, “harm” includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assaulting an at-risk adult; • neglecting (failing to properly care for) an at-risk adult; • sexual abuse of an at-risk adult; or • damaging an at-risk adult’s property by stealing from them or taking advantage of them.
<p>Harm (in criminal law – where people are punished for committing crimes)</p>	<p>In our suggested criminal law, “harm” covers physical or mental pain, any injury to physical or mental health or well-being, and loss to a person when another person unlawfully takes their property, money, pension or social welfare payments.</p>
<p>Mandated people</p>	<p>People who are required by law to report harm when they know, believe or suspect that an at-risk adult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has been harmed, • is being harmed, or • is at risk of being harmed.

Words to know	Meaning
Mate crimes	<p>When a person becomes friends with an at-risk adult and gains their trust, in order to take advantage of them. This may involve someone asking an at-risk adult for lots of money on a regular basis and never paying them back. It could also involve someone asking the at-risk adult to do things, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sell drugs, or • store weapons.
Mental disorder (This definition comes from the Mental Health Acts 2001 - 2018)	<p>Having a mental illness, serious dementia or a serious intellectual disability to the extent that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is a serious risk of the person harming themselves or someone else; • bringing the person to an approved centre would probably improve their condition; and • not bringing them to an approved centre would probably mean that the person's condition will get worse. <p>(We explain what an "approved centre" is above.)</p>
Multi-agency structure or multi-agency partnership	<p>When different organisations or agencies agree to work together to do something.</p>

Words to know	Meaning
<p>Neglect</p>	<p>This means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • failing to take proper care of someone who is in your care; • not providing them with basic needs like food, clothing or medicine; or • not getting help to provide those needs if you cannot provide them yourself.
<p>No-contact order</p>	<p>An order from a court that stops a person who is not in a relationship with the at-risk adult or living with the at-risk adult from engaging in certain behaviours. These behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • following the at-risk adult; • watching the at-risk adult; • annoying or talking to or about the at-risk adult; or • coming near the at-risk adult or the place where the at-risk adult lives. <p>These orders would last for a specific amount of time. In our Report, we have recommended three types of no-contact orders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full no-contact order. • Interim (temporary) no-contact order. • Emergency no-contact order. <p>We explain these in chapter 13.</p>

Words to know	Meaning
Oversight	When an organisation is in charge of checking that other organisations, bodies or people are following the rules that apply to them.
Permissive reporting	A type of reporting that allows a person to decide for themselves if they should report abuse.
Personal care	Help from one person to another with their medical, physical or social needs.
Policy	A set of guidelines, principles or rules. Lots of different bodies make policies, including the government. Unlike laws, if someone doesn't follow a policy, they are not breaking the law. The consequences for not following a policy are not as strict as the consequences for breaking a law.
Power of access to at-risk adults in places including people's homes	<p>A new intervention that we think should be included in adult safeguarding laws.</p> <p>This intervention would allow authorised officers of the Safeguarding Body and the Gardaí to access an at-risk adult in their home (or a similar place), to check on their health, safety and well-being.</p>

Words to know	Meaning
<p>Power of entry to, and inspection of, relevant premises</p>	<p>A new intervention that we think should be included in adult safeguarding laws.</p> <p>This intervention would allow authorised officers of the Safeguarding Body to go into relevant premises to check on the health, safety, and well-being of at-risk adults.</p>
<p>Power of removal and transfer</p>	<p>A new intervention that we think should be included in adult safeguarding laws.</p> <p>This intervention would allow the Gardaí to take an at-risk adult from where they are and bring them to somewhere else. This would allow professionals to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check on the at-risk adult’s health, safety and well-being, and • decide whether any actions are needed to safeguard the at-risk adult, <p>where the professionals cannot do these things in the place where the at-risk adult currently is.</p>
<p>Prevention</p>	<p>Taking steps to make sure that safeguarding measures are in place to prevent abuse or harm to at-risk adults.</p>

Words to know	Meaning
Prohibition orders	Orders that stop people who have committed certain crimes from doing specific kinds of work or activities again in the future.
Proportionality	<p>A guiding principle that we think should be included in new adult safeguarding laws. It means making sure that any adult safeguarding intervention taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is necessary for the particular situation; • limits the at-risk adult’s freedom as little as possible; • matches the level of risk; • lasts only as long as needed; • recognises the negative effect that trauma may have on an at-risk adult; and • is checked and reviewed regularly, in line with best practices worldwide.
The proportionality test	<p>A test that the courts use to check if an interference with a constitutional right is valid, or if the interference has gone too far.</p> <p>The courts will check whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is a very important reason for the interference, • the interference is related to the important reason, and is not unfair or unreasonable,

Words to know	Meaning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the interference limits people's rights as little as possible, and the level of interference with people's rights matches the benefits of the important reason.
Psychological harm	Harm that affects people mentally instead of physically. This includes making threats or forcing someone to do something.
Publicity order	<p>An order that a court can make when a person is found guilty of some specific crimes. It means that certain information is made available to the public, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the fact that the person has been found guilty of the crime; the facts of the crime; and the fine or other outcome.
Reckless(ly)	When a person should know that something bad could happen if they are not careful, but they go ahead anyway. Some crimes can be committed by a person being reckless.
Regulated profession	A job that requires the people who do it to achieve certain qualifications. This usually means that:

Words to know	Meaning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is a register of all the people who can work in that profession; • there are standards for the profession; • there is better control of who is allowed to work in that profession; and • workers can be removed from the register.
Regulations	Laws created by ministers or other public bodies under powers given to them by Acts of the Oireachtas.
Regulatory body or regulator	<p>A body that makes sure that people, organisations and service providers are following rules and laws.</p> <p>Examples of regulatory bodies are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIQA; • the Mental Health Commission; and • CORU.
Regulatory powers	<p>Things that regulatory bodies can do, to make sure that people, organisations and service providers are following rules and laws. Examples of regulatory powers are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting standards; and • carrying out inspections.
Relevant person	<p>An adult whose ability to keep themselves safe from harm is seriously affected because they have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a physical disability, are frail, sick or injured; • an intellectual disability;

Words to know	Meaning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a mental disorder such as a mental illness or dementia; or • autism (called “autism spectrum disorder” in the law).
Relevant premises	<p>Places where adults are likely to be living, and receiving care or services. These places include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • designated centres; • places where day services are provided to older adults or adults with disabilities; • hospitals, hospices, and other centres that provide physical health services to adults; • approved centres; • international protection accommodation centres; • domestic, sexual or gender-based violence centres; • residential centres that provide addiction support services; and • residential centres for adults who are homeless.
Relevant service	Any person or organisation who works with or provide services to adults, including at-risk adults.
Reportable harm	A type of harm that has a significant impact on an at-risk adult’s health, safety, or well-being.

Words to know	Meaning
	<p>It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexual abuse of an at-risk adult, or • serious financial abuse of an at-risk adult. <p>Note: We decided that a different definition to the general civil definition is needed for the type of harm that must be reported when someone suspects that an at-risk adult is being abused or neglected. The general civil definition is explained above under Harm (in civil law).</p>
Residential centre	A place where people live and receive care.
Responsibilities	Things someone (or an organisation) must do under the law.
Right to a good name	A constitutional right that says that people can protect their reputation and not have false and damaging statements made about them.
Right to associate	A constitutional right that says that people are free to join groups with each other and to spend time with whoever they want.
Right to be protected as a person	A constitutional right that protects a person’s physical, mental, and emotional well-being.
Right to be treated equally by the law	A constitutional right that says that the law cannot treat people differently for no good reason. This does not mean that every person must be treated

Words to know	Meaning
	exactly the same. The government can treat people differently if there is a good reason to do so.
Right to bodily integrity	A constitutional right that says that everyone has control over their own body and what happens to it.
Right to dignity	A constitutional right that says that people must be treated with respect in all aspects of their lives.
Right to fair procedures	A constitutional right that says when a decision is made that affects you, it should be made fairly and neutrally.
Right to privacy	A constitutional right that says that people have the right to be left alone and to have their own personal space.
Right to private property	A constitutional right that says that the government cannot take away a person's property without a good reason.
Right to security of the home	A constitutional right that says that a person's home is their safe space. This means that the Gardaí and other public bodies cannot usually enter a person's home without the person's permission or a power to enter that is provided by a law.
Rights of the family	A constitutional right that says that the government cannot usually interfere with the family and their private decisions.

Words to know	Meaning
Right to work and to earn a living	A constitutional right that says that a person has the freedom to look for work and make money.
Risk assessment	<p>An assessment done by someone in charge to find out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what bad things could happen; and • how likely they are to happen.
Safeguarding	<p>Taking actions to promote the health, safety and well-being of at-risk adults, including to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce the risk of harm to at-risk adults; and • support at-risk adults to protect themselves from harm at a particular time.
Safeguarding Body	The organisation that we think should be responsible for adult safeguarding in Ireland. The main function of the Safeguarding Body is to promote the health, safety, and well-being of at-risk adults.
Safeguarding plan	<p>A document that sets out the planned actions that have been identified to promote the health, safety and well-being of an at-risk adult, including to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimise the risk of harm to an at-risk adult; and

Words to know	Meaning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support an at-risk adult to protect themselves from harm at a particular time.
Safeguarding statement	<p>This statement should set out how a provider of relevant services intends to prevent harm to adults receiving the services, who are or may be at-risk adults.</p>
Safety order	<p>An order made by a court that stops a person from engaging in violent or abusive behaviour against another person.</p> <p>Safety orders can only apply to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • husbands, • wives, • civil partners, • adult children, • romantic partners (or former romantic partners) that live with the person who needs to be protected, or • people who live with the person who needs to be protected not as part of a contract (for example, family members who live together).

Words to know	Meaning
Screening	A process where someone takes a quick look at all the reports that come in and decides which ones need to be investigated fully.
Self-neglect	When a person does not take proper care of their own basic needs, and this seriously affects their well-being.
Serious harm (in criminal law)	<p>This includes any injury that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creates a big risk of death; • is psychological and has a significant impact; or • causes serious loss of function or changes to the body. <p>Note: for crimes that involve serious harm we talk about a “relevant person” instead of an “at-risk adult”. We use “relevant person” because it’s important for the criminal law to be precise about who is protected by the law. The definition of “relevant person” is narrower and more specific than the definition of “at-risk adult”.</p>
Serious incident review	<p>A review that is done when something goes wrong in a health or social care setting.</p> <p>The purpose of a serious incident review is to find out:</p>

Words to know	Meaning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what happened; • how it happened; and • what can be done differently to stop it happening again.
<p>Social care</p>	<p>This involves providing services and supports to individuals who need them. For example, it includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Meals on Wheels”; • home care or home help; • nursing care; and • residential services. <p>Social care can help people to do things that they might not be able to do by themselves.</p>
<p>Social care work</p>	<p>A profession regulated by CORU.</p> <p>Social care work is different to social work. In social care work, trained professionals work more directly with the person who they are helping, giving them practical and emotional support.</p>
<p>Social work</p>	<p>A profession regulated by CORU.</p> <p>In social work, trained professionals help people to work through the challenges they face in life. Social work might help people who are:</p>

Words to know	Meaning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • isolated; • of low income; • struggling to find housing; or • having family or relationship difficulties. <p>Social workers are different to social care workers, as they also work with the services providing care and they organise review meetings.</p>
Stakeholders	People whose work or experience relates to adult safeguarding, who shared their thoughts and experience to help us with this report.
Theft	A crime in Ireland. This happens when a person takes another person's property without the other person agreeing.
Undue influence	When someone unfairly pressurises another person to do something that is not in their best interests.
Universal mandatory reporting	A type of reporting that requires every person to report any abuse or harm if they are aware of it. This model does not allow people to decide

Words to know	Meaning
	whether they should report the abuse or harm or not.
Vetting	<p>When somebody checks to see if a person has a criminal record or if there is anything else they should be worried about. Vetting is usually done when a person applies to work with children or at-risk adults.</p> <p>We explain vetting by the Gardaí above at “Garda vetting”.</p>
Ward of Court	<p>A person who cannot make certain decisions, and so the court can make decisions for them, to protect them and their property.</p> <p>Due to a change in the law, people are no longer being made Wards of Court. Instead, the new law about capacity is used.</p>
Warrant	Written permission from the court to do something – usually, to enter someone’s home.