



COIMISIÚN UM
ATHCHÓIRIÚ AN DLÍ
LAW REFORM
COMMISSION

EASY-TO-READ

A REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR ADULT SAFEGUARDING

(LRC ER 128 - 2024)

Easy-to-Read summary of our report on a regulatory framework for adult safeguarding

What is our report about?

In our report, we talk about new laws for keeping at-risk adults safe.


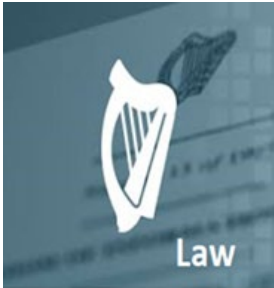



At the moment, we don't have any adult safeguarding laws in Ireland. A lot of people agree that we need them.

In our report, we focus on the most important things for new adult safeguarding laws to include. We think it is important that adult safeguarding laws:

- are based on peoples' rights,
- stop abuse happening now and in the future, and
- make sure that there are high standards for adult safeguarding in lots of different areas.

This is a summary of our report. In this summary, you can read what each chapter is about.

Chapter 1: The need for a regulatory framework for adult safeguarding

 	<p>This chapter is about why we need clear laws, or a “regulatory framework”, to prevent harm to at-risk adults in Ireland.</p>
	<p>Right now, there are some rules. But these are not enough to prevent harm to at-risk adults. This needs to change.</p>
	<p>In this report we recommend new laws and suggest what those laws should say, to prevent harm to at-risk adults.</p>
	<p>We think new laws rules should be made to prevent harm to at-risk adults. These rules will help everyone work together better to do this.</p>



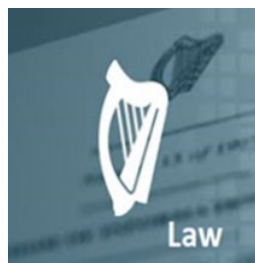
New laws will fill in the missing pieces. These laws will make sure that:

- at-risk adults have the power to look after themselves,
- at-risk adults' rights are protected, and
- at-risk adults are protected from harm.






Making new laws is important. However, we also need to tell people about them and make sure everyone is prepared for the new laws.

NEW!



We recommend that the government should also think about new laws for social care.

Chapter 2: Defining key terms in adult safeguarding legislation

	<p>This chapter explains certain key words about preventing harm to at-risk adults. It is important that everyone knows what these words mean.</p>
	<p>We want all the words to mean the same thing to everyone so future laws can be understood by everyone.</p>
	<p>We should use "adult at risk of harm" or "at-risk adult" in laws about preventing harm to adults who are at risk of harm.</p>
	<p>"Safeguarding" is doing things to look after the health, safety and well-being of adults at risk of harm. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lowering the risk of harm to adults at risk of harm, and • helping adults at risk of harm to prevent harm to themselves.



A "safeguarding plan" is a document which contains actions to:

- lower the risk of harm to an adult at risk of harm,
- promote the health, safety and well-being of an adult at risk of harm, and
- help an adult at risk of harm to prevent harm to themselves.



"Capacity" means a person's ability to understand the reason and effect of making a decision at the time they make the decision.






"Harm" can mean:

- being physically harmed or not being cared for properly,
- being sexually abused, or
- having belongings or money taken or damaged.

	<p>"Reportable harm" is when the harm is so serious that it needs to be reported.</p>
	<p>We use different words for harm when we are talking about criminal law. This is to make sure the rules are clear.</p>
	<p>"Neglect" is when someone doesn't take proper care of someone else.</p>
	<p>"Self-neglect" is when someone does not take proper care of themselves.</p>

Chapter 3: Guiding principles underpinning adult safeguarding legislation

	<p>This chapter is about the guiding principles that new adult safeguarding laws should be based on.</p>
 <p>Rights</p>	<p>The new laws we recommend are based on important ideas like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• protecting rights,• focusing on the person,• protection,• prevention,• balancing,• working together, and• taking responsibility.
	<p>We know that at-risk adults can usually decide things for themselves. However, we still think new laws in Ireland should explain how at-risk adults can get support if they want it.</p>



Rights

We recommend that the actions taken should think about the rights of at-risk adults. If there is an emergency, action might need to be taken.

Chapter 4: A rights-based adult safeguarding framework

 	<p>This chapter is about the rights that new adult safeguarding laws should be based on.</p>
 <p>Rights</p>	<p>We also talk about making sure that the people who are safeguarding at-risk adults respect the rights of at-risk adults.</p>
 <p>Choice</p>    	<p>People need to be careful when they are affecting rights like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • freedom, • privacy, • respect, and • feeling secure at home.



Rights

Sometimes, people need to limit rights to keep at-risk adults safe. However, they should only do this when it is really needed.



We think that new adult safeguarding laws should make sure that people only take actions to keep at-risk adults safe when the actions are really needed. These actions also cannot go too far. This is called "proportionality".



Rights





A safeguarding order is an order that allows people to take actions to keep at-risk adults safe.



We recommend that when a court makes a safeguarding order, they must choose the action that respects the rights of at-risk adults the most.

Chapter 5: A Safeguarding Body: functions, duties and powers

	<p>This chapter is about why we need a Safeguarding Body, and what powers it should have. The Safeguarding Body would be responsible for adult safeguarding in Ireland.</p>
	<p>The Safeguarding Body's main job would be to promote the health, safety and well-being of adults who need help to prevent harm to themselves at a certain time.</p>
	<p>The Safeguarding Body should deal with reports made by people who know or think that an at-risk adult has been harmed.</p>

	<p>The Safeguarding Body should be able to take action to prevent harm to an at-risk adult. The Safeguarding Body could take action where it believes there is a risk to the health, safety or well-being of the adult.</p>
	<p>The Safeguarding Body should be able to make safeguarding plans.</p>
	<p>The Safeguarding Body could tell the Gardaí or other groups if they think an at-risk adult is being harmed.</p>
	<p>The Safeguarding Body should work with other groups and make sure that everyone is working together to prevent harm to at-risk adults.</p>



The Safeguarding Body should also be able to ask a court if they need to:

- check on an at-risk adult,
- move an at-risk adult to a safe place, or
- stop someone from contacting an at-risk adult.



The Safeguarding Body should teach people how to prevent harm to at-risk adults.



The Safeguarding Body should also collect information about harm to at-risk adults to help it to learn what it, the government and other organisations need to do to prevent harm.

Chapter 6: Organisational and regulatory structures – A Safeguarding Body and powers of various regulatory bodies

	<p>This chapter is about the organisations that should be in charge of adult safeguarding in Ireland.</p>
	<p>We also talk about the powers that certain organisations should have. This is to make sure that they are doing their best to prevent harm to at-risk adults.</p>
	<p>The Safeguarding Body that we recommend should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• promote the health, safety and well-being of at-risk adults, and• deal with reports made by people who know or think that an at-risk adult has been harmed.

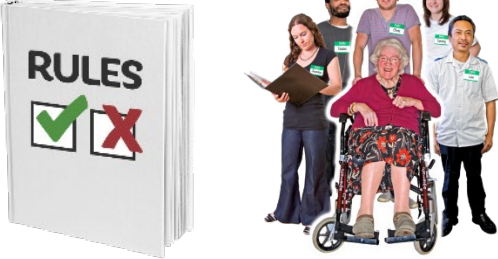


	<p>The Safeguarding Body could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new organisation set up by law, or • set up in organisation that has already been set up in law by the government.
	<p>We think that it would be best for the government to decide what organisation should be the Safeguarding Body.</p>
	<p>If the government cannot decide this straight away, we think that the Safeguarding Body should be set up by law in the HSE – until the government decides.</p>
	<p>We think that an independent organisation called a “regulator” should be in charge of making sure that the Safeguarding Body does its work and uses its powers properly to prevent harm to at-risk adults.</p>



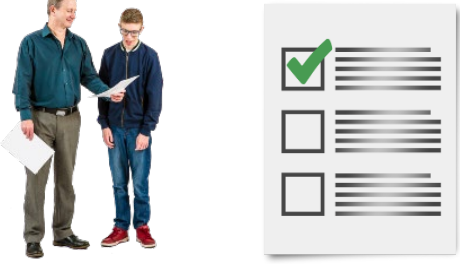








We think this could be done by changing the law to:



- give more responsibilities to HIQA, or
- give more responsibilities to a group of regulators.

Chapter 7: Imposing safeguarding duties on certain service providers

	<p>This chapter is about standards and laws that exist already that apply to service providers to prevent harm to at-risk adults and other adults.</p>
	<p>A service provider is a provider of a relevant service.</p>
	<p>A relevant service is any work where staff are likely to come into contact with at-risk adults. For example, staff working in residential centres or day services.</p>
	<p>We think service providers should have safeguarding duties. Some of these duties should be in the adult safeguarding laws.</p>

	<p>Service providers should prevent harm to adults, including at-risk adults.</p>
	<p>Service providers must check for any dangers to at-risk adults and write down how they will manage those dangers. This is called a "risk assessment".</p>
	<p>Service providers must tell everyone how they prevent harm to at-risk adults in a document that everyone can see. This is called an "adult safeguarding statement".</p>
	<p>Service providers should have other duties that are not in adult safeguarding law. These duties can be added to existing laws, standards or policies.</p>

	<p>Where an adult is at risk of harm – service providers should prepare a plan to keep them safe. This is called a “safeguarding plan”.</p>
	<p>Safeguarding plans can be added to care plans, or personal plans already made by the at-risk adult and the service.</p>
	<p>Service providers need to train their staff about how to spot danger and harm to at-risk adults, and how to stop it.</p>
	<p>We think regulators should check to see that the safeguarding duties in standards and laws are being followed.</p>
	<p>An example of a regulator is HIQA. Regulators set standards for the services they are in charge of and make sure that these services meet the standards.</p>

	<p>We also recommend that the government should think about services that do not have a regulator. It should think about whether these services should have a regulator.</p>
	<p>Where there is no regulator, standards could be updated to include some of these safeguarding duties.</p>

Chapter 8: Independent advocacy

	<p>This chapter talks about independent advocates. These are people who help adults who have difficulty explaining their opinions or telling others what they want.</p>
	<p>We recommend that the law should change about independent advocacy for adults, including at-risk adults ("adults").</p>
	<p>This includes at-risk adults living in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• centres for adults with disabilities,• centres for older people,• centres for adults with mental disorders.
	<p>The government will introduce new laws on home support services. We think this should include a right to independent advocacy.</p>



The Safeguarding Body might need to engage with an at-risk adult or an adult it believes is an at-risk adult while doing its job.



We recommend that the Safeguarding Body should make sure, as much as it can, that the adult can access independent advocacy when it engages with them.

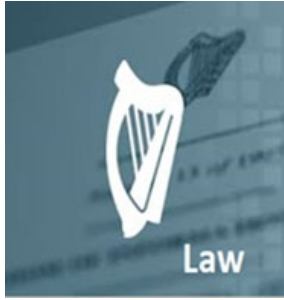


Independent advocates should be for:

- adults who find it hard to understand information and express their views, and
- when there is no other suitable person that can help the adult.

Chapter 9: Reporting models

	<p>This chapter is about how to report when at-risk adults are being harmed or not taken care of properly.</p>
	<p>We believe it is important to report these things because it can catch problems quickly and stop more abuse from happening.</p>
	<p>We think the government should change the laws about reporting to better prevent harm to at-risk adults.</p>
	<p>We do not think Ireland should have "universal mandatory reporting". This would require everyone to report abuse or neglect.</p>
	<p>We also do not think "permissive reporting" should be included in new laws in Ireland. "Permissive reporting" lets people choose to report if they know about abuse or neglect.</p>



We recommend that the government should make a law requiring “mandated people” to report harm of at-risk adults. For example, the Gardaí are mandated people.



We recommend that mandated people must report to the Safeguarding Body if they know, believe, or think that an at-risk adult:

- has been harmed,
- is being harmed, or
- is at risk of being harmed in the future.



We recommend that if the an at-risk adult (who the mandated person reasonably believes has capacity) does not want harm to be reported, then the mandated person does not have to report it.



If a mandated person tells the Safeguarding Body, they should be protected for doing this.



Mandated people should have regular training on how to spot signs of abuse or harm and how to prevent abuse or harm.

Chapter 10: Powers of entry to and inspection of relevant premises

	<p>This chapter is about new laws that will let staff who work in the Safeguarding Body go into “relevant premises”. We explain what “relevant premises” are below.</p>
	<p>This new law will allow the Safeguarding Body to do this without needing to ask a judge first.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">Rights</p>	<p>We need to make sure that harm to at-risk adults is prevented without taking away their rights.</p>
	<p>So, we recommend that certain staff who work in the Safeguarding Body should be able to go into “relevant premises” to check an at-risk adult’s health, safety and well-being.</p>



The staff of the Safeguarding Body can be helped by other people. These can be health or social care workers or anyone else that might be able to help.



If someone tries to stop the staff of the Safeguarding Body, the staff can ask a judge for an order. This will let them bring the Gardaí with them to go into the relevant premises.



Relevant premises are places where adults live and receive services. This includes:

- hospitals,
- residential centres for older people (for example, nursing homes),
- residential centres for adults with disabilities,
- centres for people with mental disorders, and
- day services.





If the at-risk adult agrees, staff of the Safeguarding Body and health or social care workers can:

- talk privately with the at-risk adult, and
- assess the at-risk adult's health.







We recommend that it should be a crime for someone who works in the relevant premises to stop the staff of the Safeguarding Body, Gardaí, or people they bring with them, from entering a relevant premises.



It would not be a crime for the at-risk adult or their family or friends to stop the staff of the Safeguarding Body, Gardaí, or people they bring with them, from entering a relevant premises.

Chapter 11: Powers of access to at-risk adults in places including private homes

	<p>This chapter is about allowing the staff of the Safeguarding Body and the Gardaí to access at-risk adults in places like people's homes.</p>
	<p>We recommend that the staff of the Safeguarding Body (or Gardaí) will need to ask a court before they do this.</p>
	<p>The law should make sure that the staff of the Safeguarding Body and the Gardaí only do this when it is needed to prevent harm to an at-risk adult. This is because homes are protected by the law.</p>
	<p>The Gardaí or the staff of the Safeguarding Body can be helped by other people. These can be health or social care workers or anyone else that might be able to help.</p>



If the at-risk adult agrees, certain staff of the Safeguarding Body and health or social care workers can:

- talk privately with the at-risk adult, and
- assess the at-risk adult's health.



We think that in some cases, the Gardaí should be able to enter a place, including a home, without needing to ask the court.

However, this can only happen if the Gardaí believe that there is a risk to the at-risk adult's life.



If the Gardaí use this power, they must write down their reasons for using it. They must tell the Safeguarding Body about this as soon as possible.



Under the new law, it will be possible to use a reasonable amount of force to enter a place. This is only if it is not possible to enter any other way.








It will be a crime for someone to stop staff of the Safeguarding Body, Gardaí or people they bring with them, from accessing the at-risk adult.



It would not be a crime for the at-risk adult to stop the staff of the Safeguarding Body, Gardaí or people they bring with them.

Chapter 12: Powers of removal and transfer

	<p>This chapter talks about a new power for the Gardaí and Safeguarding Body. We think it should be included in new adult safeguarding laws.</p>
	<p>This power would let Gardaí remove an at-risk adult from where they are and move them to a different place, to check their health, safety and well-being.</p>
 	<p>The at-risk adult could be moved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a place where health or social care services are provided, or • another safe place that the court has approved.
 <p>Rights</p>	<p>This power would affect people's rights – including the at-risk adult's rights.</p>



We need to make sure that this power is:

- used properly, and
- used only when it is really needed to protect the health, safety and well-being of an at-risk adult.



To do this, we recommend that this power can only be used where a judge agrees.



There should also be clear rules for using the power, written down in new adult safeguarding laws.



The new law should say that the Gardaí and staff of the Safeguarding Body must try to understand what the at-risk adult wants before asking the court for permission to remove them.



The power should only be used if:

- there is a serious risk to the health, safety or well-being of the at-risk adult,
- action is needed to prevent harm to the at-risk adult, and
- the at-risk adult cannot be assessed in the place they are in now.



The Gardaí can be helped by health or social care workers or anyone else that is needed to remove and transfer the at-risk adult.



The Gardaí can use a reasonable amount of force, or any other action needed to remove and transfer the at-risk adult, if they cannot use the powers otherwise.

	<p>The staff of the Safeguarding Body or the Gardaí must explain the removal and transfer powers to the at-risk adult.</p>
	<p>The at-risk adult can leave the place they are brought to whenever they want. They should be helped to do this.</p>
	<p>If the at-risk adult agrees, staff of the Safeguarding Body and health or social care workers can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talk privately with the at-risk adult, and • assess the at-risk adult's health.
	<p>It will be a crime for someone to stop staff of the Safeguarding Body, Gardaí or people they bring with them, from removal and transfer order.</p>
	<p>It would not be a crime for the at-risk adult to stop the staff of the Safeguarding Body, Gardaí or people they bring with them.</p>

Chapter 13: No-contact orders

	<p>This chapter is about orders that stop another person from contacting an at-risk adult. These are called no-contact orders.</p>
	<p>At the moment, there are some orders that can stop contact in domestic abuse situations. However, there are no orders for adult safeguarding situations.</p>
	<p>We recommend that domestic abuse orders should be changed to include more types of relationships with at-risk adults.</p>
	<p>We also recommend that there should be new orders for cases that do not involve domestic abuse. These are called adult safeguarding no-contact orders.</p>
	<p>These adult safeguarding no-contact orders would stop someone from following, bothering or coming near an at-risk adult.</p>

	<p>A no-contact order will not affect a person's rights to property.</p>
	<p>The staff of the Safeguarding Body or the at-risk adult themselves can ask the court for an adult safeguarding no-contact order.</p>
	<p>If the staff of the Safeguarding Body is asking the court, it needs to ask the at-risk adult what they want before they ask the court.</p>
	<p>The court should only make an adult safeguarding no-contact order when the health, safety or well-being of the at-risk adult requires the order.</p>
	<p>It should be a crime for a person to disobey the no-contact order, for example by contacting the at-risk adult.</p>



It should not be a crime for the at-risk adult to contact the person the order was made against.







While the court is deciding on whether to make a no-contact order, an interim (temporary) no-contact order can be made. This would have the same effect as the normal order, but would only be in place for a very short time.



The court can also make an emergency no-contact order if it thinks it is needed to prevent harm to the at-risk adult or assess the freedom or capacity of the at-risk adult to have contact with a person. This would have the same effect as the normal order, but would only be in place for a very short time.

Chapter 14: Financial abuse

	<p>In this chapter we talk about financial abuse of at-risk adults in Ireland. We talk about how the law should change to prevent financial abuse of at-risk adults.</p>
	<p>We recommend that there should be standards and laws that say that banks, credit unions and post offices should try to prevent and deal with financial abuse of at-risk adults.</p>
	<p>These new standards and laws should work well with current standards and laws.</p>
	<p>People who work at banks, credit unions and post offices should be trained to spot and prevent financial abuse of at-risk adults.</p>



If a bank thinks someone is trying to take advantage of an at-risk adult, they could pause or freeze a payment. This could give them time to check if the at-risk adult is being taken advantage of.



It should not be a crime for a bank or bank worker to pause or freeze a payment if they do it to try to prevent financial harm.






The Safeguarding Body should get reports about all abuse of at-risk adults, including financial abuse.



When at-risk adults get help or services at home, they should know how much it costs and how those costs were added up.

Chapter 15: Cooperation

	<p>This chapter looks at how organisations should work together to prevent harm to at-risk adults.</p>
	<p>We recommend that the Safeguarding Body must be able to work with others when it is carrying out its functions.</p>
	<p>We recommend that certain public service bodies and providers of certain services to adults (who could be at-risk adults) should work with the Safeguarding Body to prevent harm to the health, safety or well-being of at-risk adults.</p>



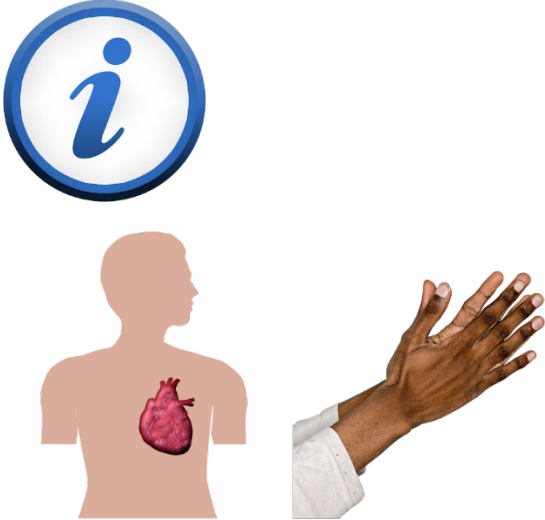


We also recommend that a group of people from different government departments should make sure that the following work together:



- the Safeguarding Body,
- certain public service bodies and
- providers of certain services to adults (who could be at-risk adults).



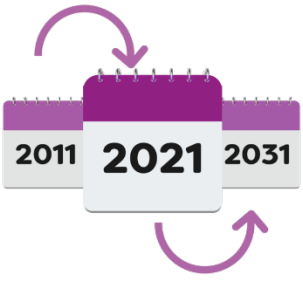
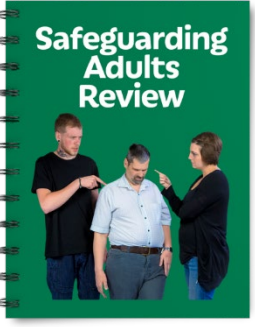

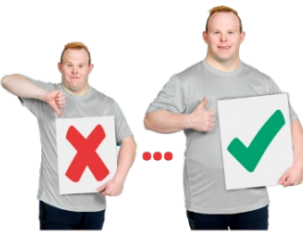

We believe that the government should think about if new laws are needed for when young people are moving from children's services to adult services.

Chapter 16: Information sharing

	<p>This chapter is about why we need to share information to prevent harm to at-risk adults.</p>
	<p>This information can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• personal data, or• special categories of personal data (for example, data about a person's health or religion).
	<p>At the moment, the rules are not clear.</p>
	<p>We recommend new laws that let relevant bodies share information with each other to prevent harm to at-risk adults.</p>

	<p>Before these new laws are made, regulations should allow relevant bodies to share information to prevent harm to at-risk adults.</p>
	<p>This means that when a relevant body is worried about an at-risk adult, they can share information with another relevant body who can help.</p>
	<p>We also think there should be clear guidance and a code of conduct on how to share this information in a legal way.</p>

Chapter 17: Adult safeguarding reviews

	<p>This chapter is about learning lessons from the past and preventing harm to at-risk adults in the future.</p>
	<p>Where something very serious happens, we think there should be a review. This will be called an "adult safeguarding review".</p>
	<p>Adult safeguarding reviews are for all care settings where there are at-risk adults.</p>
	<p>These reviews should help us learn from what happened. They are not about blaming people for what happened.</p>
	<p>These reviews should be done the same way every time and include everyone involved in what happened.</p>



The findings of these reviews should be shared with everyone.



We think these reviews must take place if the conditions for a review are met. A review will only be required if something very serious happened.



An adult safeguarding review must be done when:

- it is believed that an at-risk adult might have died because of abuse or neglect, or
- an at-risk adult was or is being seriously abused or neglected.





An adult safeguarding review must happen when it looks like there have been serious failures in care by people responsible for caring for and protecting at-risk adults.



We have not chosen who should do these reviews because there are a lot of things to think about. We think the government should make this decision.



The body doing these reviews can stop or pause a review when:

- someone else is reviewing what happened,
- it happened a long time ago,
- the issues have been fixed,
- the issues are being talked about in court, or
- the Gardaí are looking into what happened.



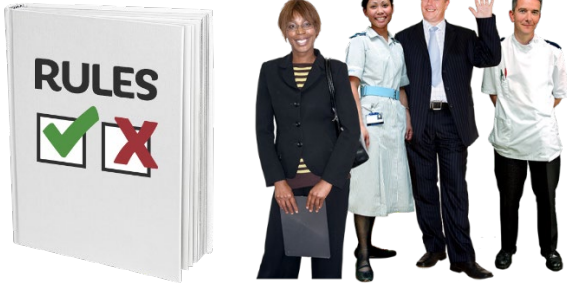


The body doing these reviews should have the power to:



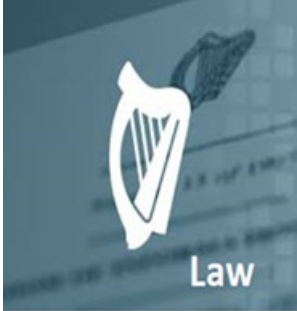
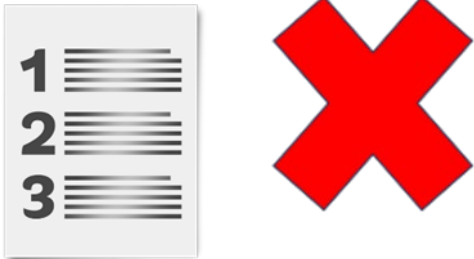
- ask people questions,
- get information, and
- read documents about what happened.



The reviewing body should be able to apply to the court for an order where someone does not help them with their review.

Chapter 18: Regulation of professionals and occupational groups

	<p>In this chapter we talk about the rules for people whose job it is to help and care for at-risk adults.</p>
	<p>Some people who look after at-risk adults do not have specific rules they have to follow. For example, health care assistants and health care support assistants.</p>
	<p>We recommend that health care assistants and health care support assistants should have to follow certain rules in their jobs. This would mean they would be "regulated".</p>

	<p>“Vetting” is when we check a person’s background before they get a job or volunteer.</p>
	<p>The government has written a new law for “mandatory re-vetting”. This would mean people have to be checked again even if they do not change jobs, once every 3 years.</p>
	<p>However, this law has not come into force yet. We recommend that it should come into force.</p>
	<p>Some countries use “barred lists” to stop certain people from working with at-risk adults. We do not think these lists should be introduced in Ireland.</p>

	<p>Instead, we recommend that Irish law should introduce “prohibition orders”. These orders stop people from working in certain jobs if they have been found guilty of certain crimes.</p>
	<p>At the moment in Irish law, prohibition orders are only for people who have been found guilty of sexual crimes.</p>
	<p>We think this law should include people who commit a crime where their victim is a “relevant person”. We explain this term in chapter 19.</p>

Chapter 19: Adult safeguarding and the criminal law

 <p>The left image shows a white harp icon on a dark background with the word "Law" below it. The right image shows a map of the British Isles with Ireland highlighted in green and a red location pin over it, labeled "Ireland".</p>	<p>This chapter is about how the criminal law in Ireland prevents harm to at-risk adults.</p>
<p>NEW!</p>  <p>The image shows a person in a yellow high-visibility vest holding a magnifying glass over the hands of another person wearing a dark jacket.</p>	<p>We suggest new crimes for harming or not caring properly for certain at-risk adults.</p>
 <p>The image shows two people: a man on the left wearing a white and black striped polo shirt and black trousers, and a woman on the right wearing a red leather jacket over a red and white striped top and red trousers.</p>	<p>We use "relevant person" to talk about specific at-risk adults in criminal law, because people need to know who the crimes apply to.</p>
 <p>The image shows two scenes of interaction. On the left, a woman in a black top is stepping on the hand of a man lying on the ground. On the right, a man in a light blue shirt is gesturing with his hand while talking to a woman in a black top.</p>	<p>We recommend that a crime of abuse, neglect, or ill-treatment against a relevant person (on purpose or without taking proper care) should be made law.</p>
 <p>The image is a red triangular warning sign with a thick red border and a black exclamation mark in the center.</p>	<p>We recommend a crime of placing a relevant person in danger of serious harm or sexual abuse.</p>



We recommend new crimes of coercive control and coercive exploitation of a relevant person in our suggested criminal law.

Chapter 20: A regulatory framework for adult safeguarding – implementation and a whole government approach

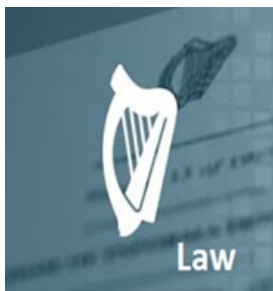
	<p>In this chapter we talk about what jobs different bodies and government departments have under our adult safeguarding laws.</p>
	<p>At the moment, different bodies and government departments do different things to prevent harm to at-risk adults. However, we think it is important that everyone works together.</p>
	<p>We recommend that the government should decide which department should be the lead department for preventing harm to at-risk adults.</p>
	<p>The government should decide what departments should be members of a group that focuses on keeping at-risk adults safe from harm. This would include the lead department.</p>



The government should decide what departments should make a plan for the work they do to prevent harm to at-risk adults.



There also needs to be guidance for the Safeguarding Body, public bodies, service providers and individuals. This is so that they understand what they must do under the new laws to prevent harm to at-risk adults.



We also think that the government should think about how our new laws would work with laws that are already in place in Ireland and with any future laws that are made.



The Law Reform Commission is an independent statutory body established by the Law Reform Commission Act 1975. The Commission's principal role is to keep the law under review and to make proposals for reform, in particular by recommending the enactment of legislation to clarify and modernise the law.

The Commission's law reform role is carried out primarily under a Programme of Law Reform. Its Fifth Programme of Law Reform was prepared by the Commission following broad consultation and discussion. In accordance with the 1975 Act it was approved by the Government in March 2019 and placed before both Houses of the Oireachtas. The Commission also works on specific matters referred to it by the Attorney General under the 1975 Act.

The Commission's Access to Legislation work makes legislation more accessible online to the public. This includes the Legislation Directory (an electronically searchable index of amendments to Acts and statutory instruments), a selection of Revised Acts (Acts in their amended form rather than as enacted) and the Classified List of Legislation in Ireland (a list of Acts in force organised under 36 subject matter headings).