

Self-Directed Support

Managing risks and safeguarding

We all live with risk in our lives. Life would be dull without risk. And taking some risks is part of learning.

But, some people who need support can be more at risk than others.

This fact sheet explains how to manage risk and also keep safe from harm or abuse.



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This fact sheet was produced by In Control and Mencap as part of In control and me, a lottery funded project.
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The basic facts

Risk is part of our lives. Taking some risks is healthy. If we didn't take any risks, we would never leave our homes. Even at home, there are risks – cooking, for example.

Managing risk

We all try to manage, reduce or avoid risks every day. Things like driving, sports activities and even running upstairs can be risky. You have to do these things with care.

If you need support, you may be more vulnerable. There may be additional risks in your life, or you may need extra help to manage risks. In this factsheet, we call the things we do to help in these situations 'managing risk'.

Safeguarding

Some people who need support can be vulnerable to harm by others – abuse or neglect, for example. Some can be a risk to others, perhaps because of their behaviour or the way they need to be supported. In this factsheet, we call the things we do to help in these situations 'safeguarding procedures'.

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More information about risk and safeguarding

Managing risks

You have the right to make choices that other people might think are risky. You also have the right to put those choices into practice.

However, you don't have the right to make decisions that put other people at risk. Also, people might refuse to support you if your decisions would put you at unreasonable risk.

You need to find a balance between living your life and not putting yourself or others at risk of harm. This is not always easy.

When you direct your own support, you make a support plan. This plan has to show you have thought about risk.

For example, you might be at risk:

- if you need help with personal care and the person helping you doesn't know how to support you properly. The helper might be at risk if they are not trained in how to lift you safely.
- if you need help with managing your finances and your helper doesn't keep proper records or forgets to pay bills. The helper might be at risk if you ask them to do something illegal.
- if you need help to communicate and your helper does the wrong thing because they don't listen to you properly. The helper could be at risk if you get angry or frustrated because they don't listen properly.

The plan must show you have thought about things like this. It has to show how you are going to stay safe and keep safe anyone who supports you.

Safeguarding and abuse.

Some people might also be vulnerable to risks from other people who deliberately try to harm them. This is 'abuse'.

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The main forms of abuse are:

- emotional abuse – for example, trying to make you feel bad about yourself, name-calling
- physical abuse – for example, hitting, pinching, biting or kicking
- financial abuse – for example, taking your money without your permission or making you agree to give your money away when you don't want to
- sexual abuse – for example, touching in a sexual way or involving you in sexual acts when you don't want to.
- neglect – you suffer because someone who should take care of you doesn't do that. This might be deliberate or not.

People who are abused often feel bad about themselves and think it's somehow their fault. It isn't.

The abuser is in the wrong. Abuse is against the law.

If you think someone is abusing you, or that they might, you can stop it.

Tell someone you trust who can do something about it – like a social worker or the police – or both. Every local authority has a Safeguarding Adults procedure.

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An example

Andy, a young man who lives with his family in Cumbria, has Aspergers Syndrome. He has had social care support all his life. After leaving school, Andy was offered a place at a day centre for adults with learning disabilities, but he knew he could do much more. He wanted a job – working with cars if possible.

Day centre or motor sport?

Andy found a course at Preston University where he could learn about the different aspects of motor sport, his real passion. But people around Andy were worried about the risks. They worried Andy might not cope with the course, managing money, meals and day-to day-life. Mostly, they worried Andy would be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation. Andy had, so far, led a very sheltered life, but had also been bullied at college and by local young people who did not understand him.

He got a personal budget and wrote a support plan. The plan made clear that the course was so important that the risks were worth it. So the money from social services enabled him to go to Preston and to have some support there. Andy used the natural support of the college's pastoral care team, and gradually made friends as any other young person would do.

Taking advantage

However, Andy was vulnerable and some people took advantage of him. During his first months at college, Andy lost several hundred pounds, his PSP games console and his TV. He thought these were 'loans' to people he could trust. He got support to speak to the Police. His supporters helped him to learn from this experience so he wouldn't be exploited again.

Andy successfully finished his course. He has a part-time job at Halfords. He also works as a volunteer for a community recycling organisation.

Learning by making mistakes

He says if he had been completely protected from risk, he would never have learned about trust. He wouldn't have gained the confidence to deal with people trying to take advantage. 'People learn by making mistakes. I needed to make mistakes too so I could learn.'

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There is a lot of information about Self-Directed Support on In Control's website: www.in-control.org.uk

Free to download or you can buy a copy from:

In Control Support Centre, Carillon House, Chapel Lane, Wythall, B47 6JX or www.in-control.org.uk/shop:

Top Tips and **In the Driving Seat**, Helen Sanderson, Suzanne McStravick and Carl Poll

How to be in control, DVD

Printed publications for sale at:

In Control Support Centre, Carillon House
Chapel Lane, Wythall, B47 6JX
or www.in-control.org.uk/shop:

The Essential Family Guide: how to help your family member be in control, Caroline Tomlinson

Keys to Citizenship: a guide to getting good support for people with learning disabilities, Simon Duffy

Risk and safeguarding

Independence choice and risk, a guide to best practice in supported decision making, Department of Health: www.dh.gov.uk

Various papers on safeguarding:

www.in-control.org.uk/safeguarding

Information on the Mental Capacity Act:

Office of the Public Guardian
www.publicguardian.gov.uk

About the **in Control and me** project

A three-year project to produce accessible information for everyone who wants to direct their own support.

The project has worked with individuals and families to decide what information should be produced. This information will reach over 11,000 people a year through the national learning disability helpline. The In Control website will also have an online advice area.

More information: Lisa Dunne: 07984 111315.

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