

INFORMATION SHEET



Police factsheet

Introduction

Some people with a severe learning disability may come into contact with the police. This might be for a variety of reasons including that the person is a **victim of crime themselves** or is **in a 'crisis' that requires external support**. Whatever the purpose of a visit by the police, we know that this can be a scary prospect both for people with learning disabilities themselves, and their families.

This document is for people who wish to inform the police about the needs of a vulnerable person before, or during a crisis situation

The concerns that people have might include:

- How the police might perceive particular actions or behaviours
- How the police may respond to behaviours that challenge
- What the police might do when faced with decisions about steps to take to manage crises
- How the person themselves might respond to the presence of the police in their home or 'safe' environment
- How the person themselves might respond to being spoken to by the police
- How communication can be undertaken successfully between parties to ensure that issues do not escalate, and that situations are managed effectively
- The increased risk that a person with a learning disability may be a more likely victim of certain types of crime such as: Hate/'mate' crime, abuse and neglect.

Regardless of the nature of people's concerns, we know how difficult crisis situations can be for people with severe learning disabilities, and their families, particularly when it comes to communication. In an emergency situation, it can be difficult for the police to receive the information they require about a person's individual needs, and the person with a learning disability may be unable to communicate this themselves either as a result of existing communication barriers, or of the distress that they are in.

Police systems that alert them that someone is vulnerable:

Some police forces are equipped with a system to alert them to a vulnerable person living in a residence so that they can respond in a manner that is suitable for that person's needs.

In some cases, this ‘flag’ is made by a relevant local authority, whilst in others, members of the public can raise the ‘flag’ themselves.

Raising a ‘Flag’ with the local police force yourself:

Some local police forces allow for a member of public to raise a ‘flag’ on their system allowing them to know before they attend an address that a vulnerable person may be present. If your local police force has this system, you could:

- call your local police force to enquire as to whether they have a system for reporting that a vulnerable person lives at an address, and how this can be done- Do not call 999 for this purpose.
- discuss with them the needs of your family member in detail, using the template below to consider the information they may require.,
- follow up, if possible and/or necessary, with further information about your family member using the template below
- ensure the information is kept up to date with any change in circumstance or need

If your local police force does not have a reporting system that you can access as a member of the public, you could:

- find out who can raise a ‘flag’ on their system for this purpose, and how you might go about ensuring that this happens. (Note: in some areas, a flag can only be raised following a home visit to assess a persons vulnerabilities. This is usually undertaken by a partner agency, rather than by the police)

What to do if there is no Police ‘Flagging’ System:

If it is not possible to raise a flag with the police locally either by yourself, or through an external agency, you could:

- consider utilising the template below to develop a ‘passport’ or information card to keep in your family members home that can be referred to by the police should they ever be required to attend the premises. Remember that the police will have limited time to consider information in an emergency. It is worth ensuring that the level of detail is kept to a minimum and that you consider what is most important for them to know
- ensure that your family member, or their supporters know to call you in an emergency so that you may speak with the police
- work with the local authority on a crisis management plan to ensure that the police are only called as an absolute last resort, and that all options are explored to ensure your family member can be kept safe in the community.

Further information:

Sometimes, crises can be avoided. For information on supporting people who may be at risk of sectioning, please see the [Meeting the Challenge Guide: What if it is getting difficult to support my family member at home or in their current service.](#)

For information and support about challenging behaviour, please see the CBF Resources on Challenging Behaviour available on our [Resources](#) page.

Whilst people with a learning disability may be more likely to be victims of certain crimes, the incidence of these remains low. Should it ever be needed, further information and support about access to justice for people with a learning disability can be found below:

Mencap Learning Disability Support Line : <https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/our-services/learning-disability-helpline>

CBF Family Support service: <https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/supporting-you/for-families/family-support-service.html> (9am-4pm Mon-Fri on **0300 666 0126** or email **support@thecbf.org.uk**)

NAS Autism Helpline: <https://www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines/main.aspx>

Template: Suggestions for Sharing Useful Information about your Relative with the Police

My name is

I have a severe learning disability. I also have the following diagnoses/needs that you need to know about:

Example: I am autistic and also have a hearing impairment

My preferred method of communication is:

Example: short simple sentences with signing

To help me to understand you, you should:

Example: ask my support worker to communicate with me

The people who need to know you are speaking to me are: (insert key contacts)

My support worker and their manager

*My family – my mother is my Deputy appointed by the Court of Protection tel
XXXXXXXXXXXX*

You should also know that:

(insert relevant information such as: whether the person is likely to have a particular reaction to emergency services personnel or strangers in their home, who can be called upon for additional/ emergency support, whether they have been previously sectioned, etc.)

Example : I am afraid of people in uniform. I may react by swearing – this is an indication that I am very stressed and afraid

Please do not touch me or come too close to me, unless I, or my support worker say it's OK.

Behaviour strategies that work for me include:

Example: moving to a different room/ enclosed garden

Things that make things worse for me include:

Example: raised voices

Following your interaction with me, it might also be appropriate for you to:

- Make a Safeguarding referral to the local authority but NOT against my family – to flag up to the LA that me and my family’s care and support needs are not being met and I require more support
- Contact my social worker or care manager (if I have one) the following day
- Suggest that a C(E)TR is requested if I may be at risk of being sectioned/admitted to an inpatient unitⁱ
- Make relevant MDT referrals for support around behaviour and any other identified needs- flag that my family need a plan of how to keep me, and themselves, safe if this was to happen in the future
- If appropriate, notify the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Record on police systems, flagging that I am a vulnerable individual and should not be arrested
- Record any other relevant information to support me on police systems
- Make sure my family and I feel safe in our local communities, and that behaviour is not escalated due to negativity and threats from others
- Ensure that any harassment, threats, intimidation or victimisation of me are recorded and treated as a disability hate crime.

Thank you for your understanding and for treating me with care and respect. For more information about supporting people with learning disabilities and/or autism you can visit:

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation:
<https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/>

Mencap: <https://www.mencap.org.uk/>

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ⁱ CTRs have been developed as part of NHS England’s commitment to improving the care of people with learning disabilities with the aim of reducing admissions and unnecessarily lengthy stays in hospitals and reducing health inequalities. You can find more information here: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/ctr-policy-guid.pdf>.