Safeguarding adults in hospitality: spotting a concern

An adult guest may need help because of neglect, abuse, exploitation or difficulty obtaining support. A respectful response begins by listening and checking immediate safety. Ask what the person needs and use the organisation's safeguarding arrangements. Explain how information will be handled. A general venue employee should involve the designated person when they are unsure about consent, risk or the appropriate external route.

England general hospitality and venue staff introduction; local adult safeguarding procedures apply.

The practical principles

Understand vulnerability in context

Adults can experience physical, sexual, psychological or financial abuse, neglect and exploitation. Care or support needs can affect someone's ability to protect themselves. Appearance alone tells you little about capacity or risk. Watch for observable concerns, such as a companion controlling all communication, threats over money or a person saying they are afraid. Keep a factual account and avoid making a diagnosis.

Speak respectfully

Where safe, give the person an opportunity to speak privately and ask what help they want. Use accessible communication and allow time. A disability or an unusual decision does not automatically mean someone lacks capacity. Explain any information-sharing steps. Consent and wishes matter, while immediate danger, serious crime or risks to others may require escalation. Staff should seek the safeguarding lead's guidance on the appropriate route.

Get the right help

Call 999 for an immediate emergency. Otherwise report concerns promptly through the venue lead and local council adult safeguarding route. Escalate through an alternative route if the lead is involved or unavailable. Record what you saw, what the person said, their wishes and the actions taken. Safeguarding staff awareness supports recognition and reporting; investigating abuse and assessing legal capacity belong to the relevant professionals.

Work through a shift scenario

Fictional exercise: a guest quietly says their companion controls their money and they do not feel safe leaving with them. Where it is safe, arrange a private conversation with the appropriate lead and avoid alerting the companion in a way that increases danger. Record the guest's words and wishes accurately. If someone is in immediate danger, seek emergency help.

Avoid the common failure

Assuming that every adult wants the same intervention can reduce trust and increase risk. Respect the person's voice while using the safeguarding process to deal with serious concerns. This England-scoped staff guide does not teach staff to assess mental capacity or investigate allegations. Keep information limited to those who need it.

A second situation to discuss

Fictional scenario: A hotel guest quietly says their companion takes all their money and they feel unsafe. The companion is waiting nearby.

Consider how to arrange a safe conversation and ask about immediate help. Involve the safeguarding lead discreetly, respect the guest's wishes and escalate immediate danger. Record the account securely and use the appropriate local safeguarding route.

Use a working record

Record the specific arrangements below before the briefing. Keep the wording short enough for a colleague to use during the shift. Where a field does not apply, explain why; where information is missing, assign a person to resolve it. Store personal or sensitive details in the business's approved system.

- Concern
- adult's stated wishes
- immediate safety
- designated lead
- information shared
- agreed next step

At the next handover, ask what changed, which action remains open and who now owns it. Close the record only when the agreed follow-up is complete. A recurring problem should inform the next briefing and the relevant operational procedure.

Check understanding

A disability automatically means lack of capacity?

No; capacity requires appropriate consideration Avoid assumptions based on disability or appearance.

An important question is:

What help would you like? A respectful response includes the adult's wishes.

A guest wants help but asks to speak away from their companion

A guest quietly asks a receptionist for help. Their companion answers every question and insists they must leave immediately. How can the receptionist create an opportunity to be heard?

Compare your decision

Follow the venue's safeguarding arrangements. Where safe, offer the guest a private conversation and ask what they want to happen. Involve the designated lead and use the emergency route for immediate danger. Avoid confronting the companion or assuming why they are speaking for the guest.

Write down the guest's own words and the actions taken. Keep observed behaviour separate from your interpretation.

Sources and scope

- Source: https://www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/help-from-social-services-and-charities/abuse-and-neglect-adults-at-risk/

Original workplace examples and suggested record. Prepared 19 October 2026. Use the current linked guidance and the venue's procedures for operational decisions.

Use this on shift

Resource page and fillable working record · Read the online guide · Course details