

Abuse is defined as:

Any act, or failure to act, which results in a significant breach of a vulnerable person's human rights, civil liberties, bodily integrity, dignity or general well-being, whether intended or inadvertent, including sexual relationships or financial transactions to which the person has not or cannot validly consent, or which are deliberately exploitative.

Abuse may be perpetrated by any person (including by other people with disabilities) but it is of special concern when it takes place within a relationship of trust characterised by powerful positions based on:

- legal, professional or authority status;**
- unequal physical, economic or social power;**
- responsibility for the person's day-to-day care;
- and/or inequalities of gender, race, religion or sexual orientation.

It may arise out of individual cruelty, **inadequate service provision or society's indifference.**

It requires a proportional response – one which does not cut across valid choices made by individuals with disabilities but one which does recognise vulnerability and exploitation.

Professor Hilary Brown, U.K. Canterbury Christ Church University, **Safeguarding adults and children with disabilities against abuse**, Council of Europe Publishing, 2003.