

What is an Appropriate Adult?

When someone is arrested by the police and taken to a police station, they have three basic rights:

- 1. The right to free and independent legal advice**
- 2. The right to have someone informed of their arrest**
- 3. The right to consult the [Codes of Practice](#) (concerning police powers and procedures)**

They will also be given a written notice informing them of their [Rights and Entitlements](#) whilst in custody.

The custody officer (usually a police sergeant) who is responsible for all detained people must make sure that interviews and other procedures are conducted as soon as possible and in the proper manner. They also have a responsibility to identify vulnerable people. Those considered vulnerable are anyone who appears (to the custody officer) to be under the age of 17, people with mental health difficulties, people with a learning disability and those who have trouble communicating and understanding things.

Having identified a young person or a vulnerable adult the custody officer has a duty to request the attendance of a responsible adult, who is known as an Appropriate Adult.

The role of the Appropriate Adult is to support and advise a young person or vulnerable adult in police custody and to facilitate communication between them and the police. This person is different to a solicitor and does not give legal advice. An Appropriate Adult can be a family member, friend or a volunteer or social/health care professional.

The role was created in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984, with the intention of further safeguarding the rights and welfare of young people and vulnerable adults in custody. The rights and responsibilities of an Appropriate Adult are detailed in the PACE Codes of Practice which are updated regularly, and can be downloaded by following the link above.

Further information can be found online at: www.appropriateadult.org.uk