

## Elder abuse – the mistreatment of an older person

### Who is abused?

Both older men and women can be at risk of being abused.

### Are there different kinds of abuse?

People can be abused in different ways. These include:

- Physical abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Financial abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect

### Where does abuse happen?

Abuse can occur anywhere:

- someone's own home
- a carer's home
- day care
- residential care
- a nursing home
- hospital

### Who abuses?

The abuser is usually well known to the person being abused. They may be:

- a partner, child or relative
- a friend or neighbour
- a paid or volunteer care worker
- a health or social worker, or other professional
- older people may also be abused by a person they care for

### Why does it happen?

There are many reasons why abuse occurs and these may vary with each incident. Many of its causes are not yet fully understood. Abuse may range from a spontaneous act of frustration to systematic premeditated assaults on an older person.

At home some of the causes would appear to include:

- poor quality long term relationships
- a carer's inability to provide the level of care required
- a carer with mental or physical health problems

In other settings abuse may be a symptom of a poorly run establishment. It is also likely to occur when staff are:

- inadequately trained
- poorly supervised
- have little support from management
- work in isolation

## What to do and who to contact

In addition to Action on Elder Abuse, there are a number of organisations that may help when an older person is being abused:

Age Concern  
FREEPOST (SWB 30375)  
Ashburton  
Devon TQ13 7ZZ

Telephone: 0800 009966  
Hours: 7.00am-7.00pm,  
seven days a week, 365 days a year  
Geographical coverage: UK

Offers a series of factsheets designed to provide practical information for older people to help themselves, and as a definitive guide for those whose work supports older people.

Separate national organisations for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Local organisations and groups are listed in the telephone directory under Age Concern.

Carers National Association  
10-25 Glasshouse Yard  
London EC1A 4JS

CarersLine: 080 8808 7777  
10am-12pm and 2pm-4pm,  
Monday to Friday

Geographical coverage: UK

Provides advice, information and support for carers. Separate national organisations for Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Counsel and Care  
Twyman House  
16 Bonny Street  
London NW1 9PG

Advice line telephone: 0845 300 7585  
10.30am-4pm.

Geographical coverage: UK

Has particular expertise in residential and nursing care and runs an advice line

for older people, their carers and relatives.

Public Concern at Work  
Lincoln's Inn House  
Kingsway  
London WC2B 6EN

Telephone: 020 7404 6609  
9am-6pm

Geographical coverage: UK

A legal advice organisation which can be contacted by those working with older people without breaching any terms of employment or duty of confidentiality.

The Relatives and Residents Association  
5 Tavistock Place  
London WC1H 9SS

Information service telephone:  
020 7916 6055

10 am-12.30 pm Et 1.30 pm-5 pm

Geographical coverage:  
England and Wales

The Relatives Association  
(Scotland)  
13 Pitt Terrace  
Stirling FK8 2E2

Helpline 01786 478 898  
24hours, 365days a year

Geographical coverage: Scotland

For anyone with an older relative or friend in a care home or long-stay hospital. Both provide a "listening ear" and practical advice about problems. There is a separate national organisation for Northern Ireland.

## What to do and who to contact

If you are being abused or are concerned about someone you know, it is very important to talk it through with someone without fear or guilt.

However, you should always be aware that, despite your concerns, any older person has the right to decline assistance from any source.

Support and information is available from Action on Elder Abuse through its helpline:

**ELDER ABUSE RESPONSE**  
**080 8808 8141**

**Monday – Friday: 10am – 4.30pm**

If you feel the problem is very serious and warrants immediate action (for example if a person is at imminent risk of harm) you should contact the police.

The number of your local police station will be in the telephone directory.

**In an emergency you should dial 999.**

## What is Elder Abuse?

Action on Elder Abuse defines abuse as:

“

**a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.**

”

**Action on Elder Abuse** aims to prevent abuse in old age by raising awareness, education, promoting research and the collection and dissemination of information.

For information about membership services, publications and training resources, contact:

**Action**  
on elder abuse

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1268 London Road  
London SW16 4ER

**tel:** 020 8764 7648 (admin)

**fax:** 020 8679 4074

**e-mail:** [aea@ace.org.uk](mailto:aea@ace.org.uk)

**website:** [www.elderabuse.org](http://www.elderabuse.org)

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