

Elder abuse is 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, whether intended or not.

Key Facts from the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) - June 2022

- Around 1 in 6 people 60 years and older experienced some form of abuse in community settings during the past year.
- Rates of abuse of older people are high in institutions such as nursing homes and long-term care facilities, with 2 in 3 staff reporting that they have committed abuse in the past year.
- Rates of abuse of older people have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Abuse of older people can lead to serious physical injuries and long-term psychological consequences.
- Abuse of older people is predicted to increase as many countries are experiencing rapidly ageing populations.

What to Look Out For, possible signs of Elder Abuse

Signs of elder abuse can be difficult to recognise at times. While a pattern of obvious bruising or injury might be apparent, other signs can be subtle. Symptoms of abuse may manifest as vague behavior changes, which might be hard to distinguish from symptoms of dementia or depression. Pay attention to any intuitive feelings that something may be wrong in a person's situation.

Some of the more general signs could include:

- Sudden changes in behavior, such as becoming more nervous, jumpy, difficulty sleeping, aggressive or withdrawn
- Losing interest in favourite activities
- Unexplained or sudden weight loss
- Increased nervousness and/or hostility around a particular person and/or situation
- Carers not allowing and/or avoiding the person being left alone with others
- Unexplained bruising and/or injuries
- Unexpected bills and/or duplicated bills for services
- Unpaid bills, especially if the person is getting support in helping manage their finances
- Unnecessary services or subscriptions
- Cash or items of value are missing
- Suspicious changes to wills, property titles or other legal documents
- Suspicious bank withdrawals
- Unkempt appearance
- Poor body odour
- Dressed inappropriately for the weather
- Home appears unclean or unsafe
- Not using aids as prescribed
- Not taking medication as prescribed
- Not attending appointments
- Pressure Ulcers

Not all of these signs necessarily mean that abuse is taking place. However, they should be taken as red flags and may warrant further investigation, especially if there are multiple signs present. If something just doesn't seem quite right in the situation, do not ignore it.

Helpful Resources

- [Who we are | Hourglass \(wearehourglass.org\)](#) – A UK based charity that focuses on the abuse and neglect of older people.
- [Protect yourself and loved ones from elderly abuse | Age UK](#)
- [7 Types of Elder Abuse and How to Prevent It](#). This is a US resource, so it may refer to legislation that doesn't apply to the UK. But it still features lots of useful information.
- [Friends Against Scams](#) is a National Trading Standards Scams Team initiative, which aims to protect and prevent people from becoming victims of scams by empowering people to take a stand against scams.
- [Pan Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Pressure Care Pathway](#)
- [Home | Safeguarding Adults Board \(saberkschirewest.co.uk\)](#)

Thank you for taking the time to read this Learning Brief. If you would like to provide any feedback or have any questions regarding the Board, please contact: Lynne.Mason@Reading.gov.uk