



# Safeguarding Awareness Week: Elder Abuse

# What is Elder Abuse?

- ▶ Elder Abuse is a single or repeated act that causes harm or distress to an older person taking place in a relationship where there's an expectation of trust. A lack of appropriate action can also lead to elder abuse, such as failing to help someone with care needs
- ▶ Around one million people over the age of 65 are victims of physical, emotional, financial or sexual abuse each year in the UK.
- ▶ One in six older people are victims of abuse. That's over 16% of our mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, grannies, grandads, friends and neighbours.

# What is Elder Abuse?

- ▶ Elder abuse is on the rise. The World Health Organisation reports that rates of elder abuse rose during lockdown. Around one in six people aged 60 and over experience some form of abuse in community settings.
- ▶ Elder abuse is often committed by someone that an elder knows and trusts. It can happen when well meaning people are overworked and overwhelmed. It can also occur when a predatory person takes advantage of an elder's vulnerability.
- ▶ Statistically, family members are the most likely to commit abuse , accounting for 60%of cases. Elderly victims of abuse can be hesitant to report them.
- ▶ Some older people may not realise what has happened, for example financial abuse. They may suddenly find themselves without the funds to pay bills or receive an eviction notice.

# Factors that put older people at higher risk of elder abuse

- ▶ Poor health of the older person
  - ▶ Physical health, poor memory, poor mental health or tendencies toward challenging behaviour
- ▶ Caregiver skills, knowledge and wellbeing
  - ▶ Poor training or understanding of the older persons conditions
  - ▶ Poor health of the caregiver
  - ▶ Poor coping skills or difficulty sleeping
- ▶ Relationship Challenges
  - ▶ Family history of abuse
  - ▶ Past or current challenging emotions, behaviour or relationships

# Factors that put older people at higher risk of elder abuse

- ▶ Livings arrangements
  - ▶ The older person starts living with someone suddenly
  - ▶ Poor social support or limited or no access to support services such as home care, respite or therapy
- ▶ Financial Challenges
  - ▶ The older person or caregiver are financially dependent on the other
  - ▶ Limited funds
- ▶ Issues in Care Organisations
  - ▶ Poor staff training, staffing issues including overworked staff or burnout and stressful working conditions
  - ▶ Low standards of care
  - ▶ Poor administration
  - ▶ Unclean or inappropriate buildings or facilities

# Signs of Elder Abuse

- ▶ Some signs that something is wrong could be:
  - ▶ Bruising, particularly patterns of bruising or other injuries such as cuts
  - ▶ A sudden change in behaviour, for example becoming more nervous, grumpy or withdrawn
  - ▶ A loss of interest in something
  - ▶ Difficulty sleeping
  - ▶ Unexplained or sudden weight loss
  - ▶ Increased nervousness around a particular caregiver
  - ▶ Hostility or frustration in a relationship between an elder and the caregiver
  - ▶ Threatening, controlling or demeaning behaviour from the caregiver

# Signs of Elder Abuse

- ▶ Continued - some signs that something is wrong could be:
  - ▶ A caregiver who won't permit the elder to be alone with trusted friends and family members
  - ▶ Bruising around breasts, buttocks, thighs and the genital area
  - ▶ Ripped or bloody clothing
  - ▶ Unexpected eviction notices or bills
  - ▶ Cash or items of value go missing
  - ▶ A difference in appearance or dressed inappropriately for the weather
  - ▶ Not wearing aids such as hearing aids or using medical devices as they should
  - ▶ Bedsores and signs of inadequate care
  - ▶ Incorrect administration of medication

# What to do if you think an Elder Person is being abused

- ▶ **If the person is in a life threatening situation call 999**
- ▶ If you're worried about someone that has care and support needs (for example, they need help due to an illness or disability), you should contact the Social Care team of the local council. For Peterborough the number is 01733 747474
- ▶ If you're unsure who to contact you can call:
  - ▶ Age UK Advice Line on 0800 678 1602
  - ▶ Hourglass on 0808 808 8141 or [visit their website](#)