

A CSCI Fact Sheet

Abuse of older people – What you can do to stop it

Abuse of older people is unacceptable. Everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Everyone has a right to live free of abuse or mistreatment, whether they live in a care home providing nursing and personal care or in their own home.

If you think an older person is being abused, it can be difficult to know what to do about it. This information is designed to help.

What is abuse?

Abuse and neglect of older people can take different forms, such as:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect of physical and emotional needs
- Financial exploitation
- Racial abuse.

What can you do about it?

Often people don't want to admit that they are being mistreated and abused. It might be painful to talk about, or they might fear retribution by the abuser.

If at all possible, try and talk to the person directly. Try to see them in private so you can speak in confidence. It may be a difficult conversation, but it could be in their interests and other people's to say what's wrong.

In some cases, perhaps because of illness or disability, an older person may not be able to tell you there is a problem, and may be relying on you to draw attention to it.

Lack of respect for older people's privacy, dignity, choice and rights can chip away at their self-esteem, while still stopping short of a criminal act. The daily routine followed by staff in some care homes can leave people feeling and being neglected and ignored. Older people may suffer abuse and neglect in this way too. This can be just as abusive as deliberate acts of harm and needs reporting.

If you're not sure what to do, talk to someone you trust about your concerns.

Who can you talk to for advice?

- Your own or the older person's doctor
- Your local council social services office
- Your local council's Adult Abuse co-ordinator
- A voluntary organisation like Help the Aged, Action on Elder Abuse or Age Concern
- Your local police
- Inspectors at the Commission for Social Care Inspection
- The manager of the care home or care service, if he or she is not the abuser, and if you think they can help
- Your local Citizens Advice Bureau

You can also find a lot of information and advice on the Internet:

Citizens Advice Bureaux	http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/
Action on Elder Abuse	http://www.elderabuse.org.uk/
Help the Aged	http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/
Age Concern	http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/
Local Government Association (links to your local council)	http://www.lga.gov.uk/LinkSearch.asp
UK Police Services (links to your local police force)	http://www.police.uk/forces/default.asp

The Commission for Social Care Inspection (regulates and inspects all care services in England – whether run by the local council or the independent sector.) <http://www.csci.org.uk/>

If you haven't got a computer, or can't use the Internet, directory enquiries can give you numbers for your local council social services, local police, or local Citizens Advice Bureau.

You can also call:

CSCI Helpline	0845 015 0120
Action on Elder Abuse	0808 808 8141

What happens when you make the call?

Your call will be taken seriously by any of the agencies you talk to. We recognise that raising concerns about older people in vulnerable situations is not easy, and needs to be handled carefully.

All staff from the agencies involved, like the police, social services, NHS and CSCI work together in these cases.

Together we make sure that people are immediately protected against their alleged abuser. We then investigate to see exactly what has been going on. If there has been a criminal offence, those involved are prosecuted.

Abusing and neglecting older people is a crime. People can and do go to prison if they are found guilty of it.