

Understanding the Mistreatment of Older People



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Foreword: The Hon Don Punch MLA

Around the world, including here in Western Australia, people are living longer and healthier lives. Older generations benefit our communities immensely, making significant contributions to society as employees, volunteers, students, family members and carers.

Unfortunately, older people can also be vulnerable to mistreatment, with elder abuse becoming increasingly prevalent globally. Elder abuse makes providing essential support and resources more difficult and challenges society's duty to ensure our elders can age safely, healthily and with dignity.



Elder abuse is a complex issue that has a profound effects on victims, their families and the wider community. The mistreatment of older people takes many forms including financial, psychological, physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

As Minister for Seniors and Ageing, I believe that safeguarding older people from elder abuse, while protecting their dignity and freedom, is one of our most important tasks. We must ensure older Western Australians feel safe, secure, respected and valued.

I congratulate the Council on the Ageing Western Australia [COTA (WA)] for leading the development of their 'Understanding the Mistreatment of Older People' guide. I acknowledge its commitment to working together with key stakeholders to ensure older Western Australians are well informed of available resources and how to access vital supports. This guide is a wonderful information resource for older Western Australians at risk of or experiencing elder abuse.

The McGowan Government recognises that elder abuse is a significant issue. There is growing momentum for change in our society, with a goal of ensuring our most vulnerable Western Australians live in a society free from abuse. To achieve this, the McGowan Government has built strong partnerships with organisations like COTA (WA) and is continuing to utilise the expertise of the community services sector and other relevant government agencies in addressing the challenges of elder abuse in our State.

I also commend the community services sector, the private sector and the broader community on their contributions and collective efforts in addressing the challenges of elder abuse and advocating for positive outcomes for older Western Australians.

I trust this guide will be one more step towards making our most vulnerable Western Australians feel safe and supported in our communities. Preventing elder abuse is everyone's business.

**The Hon. Donald Punch MLA
Minister for Seniors and Ageing**

Introduction

Elder abuse is the catch-all term that refers to the ways by which people can mistreat the elderly. We know that the reporting of this mistreatment does not reflect the actual incidence. Older people are understandably very unwilling to report a perpetrator who may be a family member or a close friend or caregiver, often because this person is the one who has principal responsibility for their care and often their finances. For this reason, much of the problem has been hidden, although our society is increasingly talking about it and encouraging older people not only to report it but also to take steps to lessen the likelihood of being mistreated as they age.



Both COTA (WA) and the Western Australian Government firmly believe that a successful approach to lessening the occurrence of the abuse of older people is based on empowering older Western Australians to deal with it if it occurs, and importantly, to prepare for older age by developing people's ability to be self-determining, capable of making informed choices and able to make their own decisions. This requires providing older people and their families with the best possible information to support them in making decisions about their lives.

Consequently, this guide has been developed to explain and illustrate key issues associated with the mistreatment of older people, including:

- Outlining the different kinds of abuse
- When and where the abuse commonly occurs
- Possible reasons for the occurrence of the abuse
- How people, including potential victims, their families and friends may help to prevent mistreatment occurring
- Strategies potential perpetrators and caregivers may adopt to help them avoid mistreating older people in their care

To increase the value of this guide for seniors and their families and friends, we have included a 'Quick Guide for Resources and Support' with contact details for accessing key resources and support, as well as a more extended 'Support and Referral Resources' with fuller details about support available in WA.

Also provided are some examples of what different types of mistreatment look like, for the victim or the observer.

We hope that you find this guide helpful and informative.

Chris Jeffery
Chief Policy Officer, Council on the Ageing (WA)

EXAMPLES OF MISTREATMENT

Margaret's Story

Margaret lives with her husband and 3 children and also her ailing mother who is now aged 83 and not very mobile. Margaret holds down a part-time job and generally does most of the cooking and housekeeping. Her husband, a fly in fly out worker, is away for weeks at a time and her teenage children are always busy with schoolwork, sport and hanging out with friends.

Margaret is always tired, usually stressed (as there just are not enough hours in the day) and often impatient with her mother and the constant demands she makes. She sometimes gets so frustrated that she slaps her mother, raises her voice at her or 'forgets' to check that she is comfortable.

Well, 'so what?' you may think. We all get frustrated and do things we may regret later. Surely a little tap every now and again, an occasional raising of the voice and not being on-call all the time, are not serious offences.

Think again! Surprisingly for many people, the actions outlined above are examples of the mistreatment of older people, commonly referred to as elder abuse.



What constitutes the mistreatment of older people?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines elder 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 (WHO, 2008).’ Elder abuse can take various forms such as financial, physical, psychological and sexual. It can also be the result of intentional or unintentional neglect.

Who mistreats older people?

You may not be aware that, as with some other forms of violence, the mistreatment of older people is often committed by a person known to the victim. This person may be a family member, a friend or a carer, or another person the elder person may trust, rather than a stranger. What is difficult to understand, knowingly, or unintentionally, as is the case with Margaret, perpetrators are often close family members, over two-thirds being children of the victim.



George's Story

Since his wife died some years ago, George has rented a small apartment. Although he is reasonably mobile, he cannot drive and therefore is unable to take himself shopping any more. He is also finding it difficult to cook properly and to wash his clothes. He's not really sick, just becoming less agile and more dependent on others to do things for him. He is not ready to go into aged care and does not want to, anyway. He would shift into a retirement village but his son, Paul, has convinced him that it would cost too much, be very complicated to arrange and not be of any benefit.

Paul is the only child living in the State and promised George some time ago that he would look after him. Paul takes him shopping and sometimes brings over frozen meals, so George does not have to cook so much. He also takes his father's washing home, especially the large items like sheets and towels. Paul has an **Enduring Power of Attorney** which means he has legal authority to operate his father's financial matters, including his bank accounts. Consequently, Paul does all his father's financial transactions as George finds it confusing to master credit cards, ATMs and online banking.

Over the last 12 months, Paul is becoming more resentful of being the only 'carer' and finds excuses not to visit his father, sometimes for weeks at a time. He also feels it is unfair that the proceeds of the sale of the family home have been set aside in a Trust to be divided equally among all the children, when it is he, Paul, who is doing all the caring. Consequently, he has no qualms in paying himself for the tasks that he does do, even buying many of his own personal items with his father's credit card; his father never checks, anyway. He is also starting to put a lot of pressure on his father to change his Will so that he receives a greater proportion of the inheritance for looking after him. Paul brings up the topic of changing the *Will* every time he visits and has even created a revised *Will* which he tries to get his father to sign. Social visits almost never occur now and consequently George is becoming more isolated, more fearful of his son's anger and less capable in all respects.



This may not seem unreasonable: anyone in Paul's position would become resentful and entitled to be paid something for services rendered, especially if the other siblings contributed nothing in cash or kind. Also, given the circumstances, it is only fair that he receives a greater portion of the inheritance, isn't it? Wouldn't anyone get hot under the collar at times and feel justified in missing a few visits and not taking the old man out? After all, Paul has a life, too, including his own family.

Think Again! Even though Paul may not realise it, his behaviour towards his father displays many elements of the mistreatment of older people. We know that one of the most common kinds of abuse is financial abuse, and Paul is engaging in many aspects of financial abuse which are clearly outlined below.

Type of Abuse	Examples
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Theft of assets, money or valuables▪ Improper use of Guardianship or Enduring Power of Attorney▪ Exploiting trust to gain control and influence over financial decision making▪ Using a credit card/financial document without authorisation▪ Applying emotional pressure to gain belongings or gifts▪ Paying other people's debts▪ 'Inheritance impatience' i.e. trying to change the Will



In addition, Paul is demonstrating other forms of mistreatment such as:

- Social (restricting his father's access to social activities and friends)
- Neglect (reducing food and laundry supply, leaving George alone for extended periods)
- Psychological (harassing his father to change his Will, withholding affection, removal of decision-making power)

What are some other common kinds of mistreatment of older people?

Although the mistreatment of older people often involves financial matters, other kinds of mistreatment are also common, sometimes occurring in tandem.

You may very well have experienced being treated as a child yourself or been a witness to this; prevented from seeing grandchildren or friends; left alone for long periods of time; being shouted at or humiliated; or even being slapped or pinched.

Nina's Story

Nina is aged 82 and has not been able to master the English language. She lives with her husband and daughter, Maria, who moved in temporarily with them recently after returning from overseas. Maria has noticed that her father is very controlling, is very rude to Nina and does not take her out. He will not even take her to church, despite Nina really wanting to attend. Maria has also recently noticed that her mother is becoming very withdrawn and quiet and seems very listless and anxious.

What is going on here? Nina's husband is engaging in several forms of psychological mistreatment including denying access to services (church); preventing contact with friends; verbal abuse; intimidation and withholding affection.



Ron's Story

Ron is aged 78 and has been diagnosed with dementia, which is still in its fairly early stages. He has also recently had a knee replacement which is proving troublesome to rehabilitate. He lives in a granny flat attached to the home of his son, Jake, and Jake's family.

A long-time friend who visits every few weeks is noticing that Ron often has bruising around his arm or arms. In addition, he observes that Ron has been shifted into a small spare bedroom and that he and his room often have an unpleasant smell. Ron is recently complaining that he does not know what to do about his increasingly painful and increasingly stiffening knee. Ron also seems to be losing weight.

Have you ever witnessed or experienced symptoms like Ron's? If so, you will be familiar with forms of mistreatment that are associated with neglect: poor personal hygiene; lack of medical care with Ron's injury not receiving proper attention; unexplained weight loss; and physical abuse as indicated by the bruising.

As you can see from your own observations or even your own lived experience, as well as from the examples outlined so far in this guide, the mistreatment of older people can occur in many different ways, even though financial mistreatment is the most commonly reported form.

For a more detailed summary of the types of mistreatments of older people, see the resources section at the end of this guide.



How do you recognise the typical signs of mistreatment of older people?

Older people react to mistreatment in different ways. You may have observed a friend or relative becoming increasingly withdrawn, less happy (or even fearful) along with being increasingly anxious or even depressed. They may become less willing to engage in previously enjoyed social activities. These signs are often more difficult to detect as they can occur slowly over a long period of time. Physical signs of mistreatment, such as bruising, loss of weight, appearance of unexplained injuries, or difficulties in walking or sitting, may be more readily noticeable. There are also signs you may not be aware of such as insomnia, declining social contact and being left alone for long periods.

For a more detailed summary of how to recognise the typical signs of mistreatment of older people, see the resources section at the end of this guide.



Who is particularly vulnerable? In which situations does the mistreatment of older people typically occur?

The mistreatment of the elderly can, and does, occur in many situations, but many groups of people are particularly vulnerable, such as:

- Those for whom English is a second language or those from non-English-speaking backgrounds. We know they are extremely susceptible to being exposed to mistreatment, especially if their culture attaches great shame to speaking out about it
- People who are frail and those with poor mobility
- Those who are isolated and/or with limited awareness of community services, information and support
- Those who are dependent on family or a carer when there is a mistrust of external support
- People from the LGBTIQ+ community often end up being cared for by their partner, having lost contact with their families. This can lead to a stressful situation resulting in intentional or unintentional mistreatment
- Those experiencing a decrease in cognitive ability



Ken and Betty's Story

Ken and Betty are an older couple who own their own home. Their son, Brian, who has not had a close relationship with his parents for some years, asks if he and his partner Paula, can move in for a few weeks with their pet dog as their landlord is selling their rental property. Brian is unemployed and drinks excessively. The dog barks incessantly and digs large holes all over the back yard. Paula has mental health issues, becomes agitated at the slightest provocation, sleeps throughout most of the day and stays up until the early hours of the morning watching television at a very high volume. The younger couple refuse to make any financial contribution to household costs, and household and food bills increase enormously. Ken and Betty struggle financially and begin to suffer from stress, depression, and poor health because of the situation.

Situations such as this one illustrates what can happen when poor family relationships are entangled with other factors such as financial pressures; substance abuse; and mental health conditions. This also illustrates very clearly how some people will take advantage of an opportunity to exploit older people because of a family connection.



What are some common factors leading to the likelihood of becoming a perpetrator?

All of the examples so far re-enforce the notion that the mistreatment of older people can occur in all kinds of settings and situations and is often perpetrated by close family members or carers.

There are, however, factors that we know may increase the risk of becoming a perpetrator, and these include:

- A spouse or carer who has a history of mental problems or drug or alcohol abuse
- A caregiver or spouse who suffers from stress or burn-out
- The perpetrator's personality (domineering, for example) and the quality of the relationship, especially if there is a history of conflict or violence
- The perpetrator's dependency on the older person, such as providing a home or financial security
- Reluctance or lack of knowledge in how to provide care, leading to feelings of stress or burden
- A sense of entitlement or 'inheritance impatience'

While none of these factors automatically results in a person mistreating an older person, they do provide an insight into conditions which may lead to such a distressing outcome.

These factors, when combined with situations in which the older person is from a non-English-speaking background, who are frail and have poor mobility, isolated from community support or who are dependent on family or a carer, provide a common background to the incidence of mistreatment.

What can an individual do to avoid being mistreated?

We know that the incidence of elder abuse is vastly under-reported. Many victims feel ashamed or embarrassed that they have allowed it to happen. Many will not name the perpetrator who may be a family member or close friend. Many older people also feel too vulnerable to withstand the emotional consequences of reporting a friend or family member.

One of the best and easiest ways to avoid being a victim of mistreatment in later life is to prepare thoroughly for later life by:

- Making sure that your finances are arranged so that regular bills and expenses are paid by you and no-one else (e.g. arrange direct debits where possible for recurring bills)
- Ensuring that legal documents such as wills and house titles are prepared and that more than one person knows where they are safely located
- Informing more than one person of any personal arrangements you have made such as Enduring Power of Attorney, Enduring Power of Guardianship or Advance Health Directive
- Importantly, maintaining social contacts so that more than one person outside of your family is aware of your circumstances and your general well-being



Additionally, there are several steps you can take that may help to lessen the likelihood of becoming a victim of mistreatment.

Steps to Take	Examples
Cultivate Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Seek help from friends, family, or local community care groups as soon as possible▪ Cultivate a wide range of strong relationships with people from all walks of life▪ Establish a way of contacting someone you trust if there is an emergency
Engage in Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Enrol in day programs that provide social activities, day trips, exercise▪ Engage in community service programs that focus on well-being, group activities and physical involvement▪ Develop hobbies or interests that involve interacting with other people
Seek Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ If eligible, take advantage of the Commonwealth Home Support program (CHSP) to help with household chores or travel to appointments, contacts with social groups and other support programs▪ Seek counselling from one of the services listed in this guide, to deal with particular situations▪ Talk to your GP or health professional who can guide you in dealing with the mistreatment
Avoid	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Try to avoid becoming dependent on only one person for your care and support, including managing your financial affairs

If you are experiencing mistreatment, see the resources section at the end of this guide.

How can a friend or family member help prevent the mistreatment of an older person?

Friends and family members are often in a good position to help prevent mistreatment of an older person or to help when it occurs. By following these suggestions, you can play a very important part in helping to prevent mistreatment or dealing with it if it occurs:

- Check-in often on older people, especially if they suddenly have very attentive family members or new friends
- Become knowledgeable about how to recognise and how to report mistreatment
- Learn how the signs of the mistreatment of older people differ from the normal ageing process
- Listen to the older person and their caregivers to understand their difficulties and provide support
- Be sure to visit regularly: this applies to family members, friends or volunteers
- Encourage the older person to participate as much as possible in activities and interests which involve other people

If you suspect mistreatment of a friend/relative is occurring, see the resources section at the end of this guide.



How can a caregiver (including a spouse) avoid becoming overwhelmed by the demands of caring for someone who is frail and in need of constant attention?

If you are a caregiver to an elderly person, you may feel you are in danger of hurting or neglecting them. For instance, you may be having trouble controlling your anger and find yourself getting very short-tempered and lashing out at the person in your care. Other people may have expressed concern with your welfare and noticed tension between the two of you. Or maybe you simply feel emotionally disconnected or overwhelmed by the daily needs of the elderly person in your care.

Recognising that you have a problem is the biggest step to getting help and preventing abuse.

The following steps can help you to avoid mistreating or neglecting an older person:

Take immediate steps to relieve stress and burnout. Stress is a major contributor to mistreatment and neglect. You can help reduce your stress levels by regularly engaging in stress-relieving strategies such as yoga, meditation, deep breathing exercises and exercising.

Request help from friends, relatives, or local respite care agencies. Every caregiver needs to take regular breaks from the stress of caring for an older person and to attend to their own needs, if only for a couple of hours at a time.

Learn techniques for controlling your anger.

Take care of yourself. If you are constantly tired and not getting enough rest, you are much more likely to succumb to anger. Eat a healthy diet, get regular exercise and take care of your own medical needs.

Seek help for depression. Family caregivers are especially at risk of depression, but you can find ways to boost your mood and outlook and deal with your problem.

Find a support group for caregivers of the elderly. Sharing your concerns and experiences with others facing the same challenges can help relieve the isolation you may be feeling as a caregiver. It can also be a great place to gain valuable tips and insight into caring for an older person.

Carers WA provides a range of supports, services and advice for carers.

You can access these free services online, by telephone or in person. You will find their contact details in the resources section at the end of this guide.

Get help for any substance abuse issues.

It is never easy but do everything you can to address drug or alcohol dependence.

Get professional help.

If you cannot seem to stop yourself no matter how hard you try, it is time to get help by seeking professional counselling.

If you are a caregiver it is important that you are able to access support to meet your own needs. See the Support and Referral Resources at the end of this guide.



Where do you report suspected elder abuse if you are a witness?

It may be difficult to report suspected elder abuse if the victim does not agree to the mistreatment being reported. This may occur, for example, if the alleged perpetrator is a caregiver, a family member or a close 'friend'.

It is always advisable however to obtain the agreement of the victim to report the mistreatment on their behalf. If the victim steadfastly refuses to provide this agreement, a judgment will need to be made as to whether you believe the abuse is serious enough to report it anyway, in order to discuss your concerns and explore options to address the issue.

You can refer the older person to the **Elder Abuse Helpline on 1300 724 679** or with their consent contact the Helpline on their behalf. Helpline staff are available to discuss concerns and explore options to address the issues. If the older person refuses any intervention (does not consent) and is considered to have decision-making capacity, their choice for non-intervention must be respected, unless there is further foreseeable risk of harm to themselves or others.

The older person should be advised that they may contact you or other support agencies for help in the future. If the older person has (or is suspected to have) impaired decision-making capacity and does not consent, contact the **Telephone Advisory Service** at the **Office of the Public Advocate** on **1300 858 455**.

If the victim lacks decision-making capability and is under the care of a legally appointed Guardian, then the alleged abuse should be discussed with the Guardian in the first instance to determine an appropriate course of action. If you suspect the Guardian of being the perpetrator of the abuse, refer to the support services outlined above.

Educate and support the older person no matter what their choices are and always provide contact information for services. Sometimes this must be done discreetly to avoid alerting the abuser and causing negative repercussions for the older person.

See 'Observer of mistreatment of an older person' in the resources section at the end of this guide.

CONCLUSION

In this Guide we have not attempted to deal with every aspect of seniors at risk or the mistreatment of older people. What we have attempted to do is to explain and illustrate simply and clearly:

- Different kinds of abuse and how they are commonly manifested
- The conditions under which the mistreatment of older people commonly occurs
- Factors that may lead to the likelihood of mistreatment occurring
- Ways a potential victim may help themselves to avoid being mistreated
- Strategies a concerned friend or a family member can adopt to prevent the likelihood of mistreatment occurring
- Strategies caregivers may find useful in helping them to avoid mistreating a person in their care

Finally, we have provided a list of local resources you may find useful in dealing with issues associated with the mistreatment of older people.



Types of mistreatments of older people

Type of Abuse	Examples
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Theft of assets, money or valuables ▪ Improper use of Guardianship or Enduring Power of Attorney ▪ Using a credit card/financial document without authorisation ▪ Applying emotional pressure to gain belongings or gifts ▪ Paying other people's debts ▪ 'Inheritance impatience' (a family member not wanting to wait to claim what they feel entitled to) ▪ Exploiting trust to gain control and influence over financial decision making, see examples below
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliberately causing physical pain or injury (slapping, hitting, bruising, pushing and shoving, tripping) ▪ Use of physical restraints
Psychological Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Verbal/non-verbal intimidation, humiliation and disrespect ▪ Harassment ▪ Shouting ▪ Withholding affection ▪ Removal of decision-making power ▪ Infantilisation (treating an adult as if they were a child)
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prevention or restriction of access to social activities, family or friends ▪ Geographic isolation ▪ Denying or monitoring phone and internet use ▪ Ceasing to attend social activities and cancellation of services
Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Failure to meet needs for medical care, nutrition, hydration, hygiene, clothing or shelter ▪ Leaving the older person alone for extended periods of time ▪ Abandonment, desertion or deliberate disregard ▪ Preventing access to services ▪ Receiving the Carer Allowance but not providing care
Medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Over or under-medicating, insufficient pain management ▪ Chemical restraint ▪ Negligence leading to bedsores, unsanitary conditions, untreated medical conditions or forced feeding
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unwanted sexual behaviour, including rape, indecent assault, sexual harassment and sexual intrusion ▪ Inappropriate touching ▪ Voyeurism ▪ Sexually suggestive language or unwanted exposure to offensive media such as pornography

How to recognise typical signs of mistreatment

Type of Abuse	Examples
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interfering with the older person's mail, resulting in no access to bank statements so that unusual activity is not detected ▪ Vagueness explaining current finances and explanations offered don't make sense ▪ Showing emotions such as fear, stress, and anxiety when money is mentioned ▪ Accumulation of unpaid bills ▪ Unexplained disappearance of cash and valuable items ▪ Unexplained or unauthorised changes to wills or other asset-related documents
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Burns, bruising, and injuries at different stages of healing ▪ Attending multiple medical centres rather than the same one ▪ Showing fear or anxiety whenever a particular person is near
Emotional Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sometimes very difficult to detect and/or not acknowledged by the elder person ▪ May show signs of depression, anxiety, confusion, isolation, insomnia, loss of the enjoyment of life and anger
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discouraging visitors ▪ Not attending social events and family occasions ▪ Withholding aids to help with mobility and contact e.g., phone access or hearing aids
Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Physical signs of malnourishment and weight loss ▪ Dressed inappropriately for the environment and season ▪ Injuries that appear untreated ▪ Odours and dirty clothes associated with poor personal hygiene ▪ Abandoned or left alone for long periods
Medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Signs of physical or chemical restraints being used ▪ Obvious signs of pain or confusion ▪ Unusually quiet and unresponsive to company
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bruising around genitals and inner thighs ▪ Torn, stained or bloody underclothes ▪ Difficulty in walking or sitting ▪ Sitting huddled, avoiding being touched, or fear of certain visitors

Support and Referral Resources

Organisation Name	Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre ‘Older People’s Rights Service (OPRS)’
Organisation Contacts	<p>If you need an interpreter, call 131 450</p> <p>T: Joondalup 08 9301 4413</p> <p>T: Mirrabooka 08 9440 1663</p> <p>E: info@nsclegal.org.au</p>
Organisation Website	W: https://www.nsclegal.org.au/
Overview of Services Provided (including any fees)	<p>A client centred service which provides legal information and advice, advocacy, and support to Older Australians experiencing or at risk of experiencing elder abuse from family, friends and informal carers.</p> <p>Future planning documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enduring Powers of Attorney ▪ Enduring Powers of Guardianship ▪ Deeds of Family Agreement <p>Legal Advice and Support in relation to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operation of Enduring powers of Attorney and Enduring powers of Guardianship ▪ Concerns over accommodation for care arrangements (granny flats) ▪ Unsecured loans - recovery of debts owed ▪ Removal of family, friends and informal carers and their personal property from older persons home ▪ Reviewing alterations to certificate of titles by family, friends and informal carers

Support and Referral Resources

Organisation Name	Advocare
Organisation Contacts	<p>Advocare WA Elder Abuse Helpline</p> <p>Free call 1300 724 679 E: rights@advocare.org.au Advocare Aged Care Advocacy and Information</p> <p>T: 08 9479 7566</p> <p>Free call 1800 655 566 E: rights@advocare.org.au</p> <p>Advocare Community Visitor Scheme T: 08 9479 7566</p> <p>E: volunteer@advocare.org.au</p> <p>If you speak a language other than English, Advocare can arrange assistance via the Translating and Interpreting Service.</p>
Organisation Website	W: https://www.advocare.org.au/
Overview of Services Provided (including any fees)	<p>Supporting and protecting the rights of older people in Western Australia through independent, free and confidential, advocacy information and education.</p> <p>Confidential and Free WA Elder Abuse Helpline</p> <p>If you are experiencing any type of elder abuse, Advocare can work with you to resolve the situation. With your consent, they can also work with a family member or another representative who is working in your best interests, to resolve the situation.</p> <p>W: www.advocare.org.au/understanding-elder-abuse/</p> <p>Confidential and Free Aged Care Advocacy information and advocacy about aged care services at home or in residential care.</p> <p>W: www.advocare.org.au/aged-care-advocacy/</p> <p>Advocare Community Visitor Scheme volunteers provide companionship for isolated older people in their home and in residential aged care.</p> <p>W: www.advocare.org.au/volunteer-with-us/</p>

Support and Referral Resources

<p>A definition of to whom the service is relevant</p>	<p><u>Advocare</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If you, or someone you know, is experiencing or at risk of experiencing Elder Abuse in any form, Advocare operate the WA Elder Abuse Helpline 1300 724 679. Advocates will support you by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listening to your needs and concerns - Helping you to fully explore the options available to address the issue - Providing comprehensive resources and information - Supporting you with any conversations or actions you need to take; and referring you to free legal services and supports - It is important to note that Advocare will not intervene or take any action without your consent, nor do they carry out any investigations - Services are free and confidential, and you can choose how much you would like them to be involved in resolving the issue ▪ Receiving aged care services can reduce vulnerability to Elder Abuse. If you would like to access aged care or have issues with aged care services ▪ Advocare provide free and confidential Aged Care Advocacy – providing information to all and advocacy for anyone eligible to receive aged care services in both residential and home care settings (or their legally recognised decision maker) ▪ Advocare provide free and independent Aged Care Navigation involving face-to-face information and support to assist you to access and navigate aged care services. This free service is available to people who are eligible for, but not accessing aged care services ▪ Advocare also provide free Community Education about aged care rights and access to community members and residents of aged care facilities and their families and carers - call Advocare if you would like to arrange a community education session or one for residents in your aged care facility ▪ Advocare also provide free Community Education on how to identify, prevent and respond to Elder Abuse to community members, service provider staff (may incur a fee) and other professionals ▪ Social isolation increases the risk of Elder Abuse; Advocare is a provider of the Community Visitor Scheme with over 100 volunteers throughout metropolitan Perth - can assist you if you would like to be connected with a volunteer or to volunteer to provide companionship for an older person who may be isolated or lonely in their home or in residential aged care
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Support and Referral Resources

Organisation Name	Legal Aid WA ‘Seniors Rights and Advocacy Service’ and ‘Elder Rights WA’
Organisation Contacts	<p>Infoline: 1300 650 579</p> <p>Infochat: on the Legal Aid WA website</p> <p>In person at Level 1, 32 St Georges Terrace, Perth or at any Regional Office</p> <p>E: seniorsrights@legalaid.wa.gov.au</p>
Organisation Website	W: www.legalaid.wa.gov.au
Overview of Services Provided (including any fees)	<p>The types of matters they can provide advice and assistance on include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning for the future (Enduring Powers of Attorney, Enduring Powers of Guardianship, guardianship and administration orders and Advance Health Directives) ▪ Providing legal assistance when someone lacks decision making capacity (guardianship and administration) ▪ Recovering money or property ▪ Family disputes ▪ Granny flats and moving in with family ▪ Family law and issues involving grandchildren ▪ Protection from violence or abuse
A definition of to whom the service is relevant	Legal Aid WA always prefer to speak to the older person. Depending on the circumstances they may only be able to provide legal information, rather than legal advice, if the person contacting them is not the older person.

Support and Referral Resources

Organisation Name	Relationships Australia WA ‘Peel Senior Relationship Service’
Organisation Contacts	T: 08 6164 0173 E. peelsrs@relationshipsaustralia.org.au
Organisation Website	W: www.relationshipsaustralia.org.au
Overview of Services Provided (including any fees)	Case Management and Mediation Free support This service is provided at no cost as part of the Federal Government’s National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians.
A definition of to whom the service is relevant	The Peel Senior Relationship Service is a case management and mediation service supporting older people and their families residing in the Peel region to find solutions to ageing related issues. Support can help to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prevent or resolve family conflict ▪ Facilitate difficult conversations ▪ Plan for the future (including medical, health, financial or living arrangements) ▪ Make decisions that protect the interests, rights and safety of the older person ▪ Reduce the risk of elder abuse, including emotional and financial abuse <p>You can attend the services on your own, with your partner, a carer or advocate, as a family, or your children or parent(s) can come by themselves.</p>

Support and Referral Resources

Relationships Australia WA ‘Peel Senior Relationship Service’

What is case management?

Case management supports a person to assess immediate, short-term and long-term needs and develop a plan to achieve goals. The plan considers an older person’s capacity, current relationships and any other significant issues. Case managers help people to access appropriate support, ensure adequate progress and advocate on an older person’s behalf where appropriate.

Why mediation?

Mediation can be used in the early stages of family conflict or to resolve specific ageing related disputes such as financial concerns, planning for the future or legal issues.

Mediation helps to resolve disputes, build trust and reconcile the interests of parties, helping to sustain healthy family relationships.

In many cases, early intervention with case management support can mean mediation may not be required.

The decisions you make are not legally binding. If you would like to put your arrangements in writing, your practitioner can assist you.

Staff

The Senior Relationship Service team have professional qualifications and experience in social work, psychology, mediation, law and/or counselling.

Staff providing services receive professional supervision and ongoing specialist training in the area of elder abuse and ageing-related issues. They are also trained in elder mediation and specialised counselling.

Quick Guide: Resources and Support

Anyone (including legal guardians and residents of aged care facilities) seeking advice on, observing or experiencing elder abuse can contact the Elder Abuse Helpline on 1300 724 679.

On this page are the contact details of support agencies dealing with particular issues associated with elder abuse.

Caregiver including Homecare Provider and Primary Caregiver

Description of Situation	Resource to Contact	Contact Details
Person contracted to provide in-home care who suspects elder abuse.	Service provider to whom you are contracted.	Varied, depending on the service provider.
Live-in or part-time caregiver who feels under stress and in need of support or respite.	Carers WA	T: 1300 227 377

Observer of Mistreatment of Older Person

Description of Situation	Resource to Contact	Contact Details
Person seeking a formal investigation especially where the victim's decision-making may be impaired.	Office of the Public Advocate.	T: 1300 858 455
If you suspect that elder abuse is occurring, report it to police, who will identify the risk and determine whether a crime is occurring. You can also report suspected elder abuse to the victim's care provider.	Police Department: Elder Abuse Prevention Unit.	T: 131 444

Other Useful Elder Abuse Information Sources

Compass An initiative of Elder Abuse Action Australia and funded by the Attorney General's Department.	National ELDERhelp line and extensive information resources.	W: www.compass.info T: 1800 353 374
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About Council on the Ageing Western Australia

Council on the Ageing (WA) Inc. [COTA (WA)] was established in 1959 as the peak body representing the interests of people aged over 50 in Western Australia.

As a member of the COTA Federation, COTA (WA) collaborates with the other State COTAs as well as COTA Australia to advocate and influence (on a state and national level) on matters that are important to older Australians.

In July 2020, COTA (WA) was formally appointed by the State Government as the first ever Vulnerable Seniors Peak in Western Australia.

COTA (WA) represents the interests of Western Australia's seniors on many advisory committees and reference groups. Our advocacy work includes collaboration with sector partners on issues such as health, elder abuse, affordable housing, mature age employment and vulnerable cohorts including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and CaLD and LGBTQI+ people.

COTA (WA) delivers the following programs:

- Strength for Life™
- Aged Care System Navigation

Publications currently in circulation are:

- The Goodbye Guide
- The At Home Guide
- Interruptions to Daily Living Guide (English, Simplified Chinese, Polish, Italian and Greek)
- Understanding the Mistreatment of Older People

Acknowledgment of Country

COTA (WA) acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country. We pay our respects to their Elders both past and present and acknowledge that the land on which we live and work, is and always will be, Aboriginal land.

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Supported by The Government of Western Australia Department of Communities.

WA Strategy to Respond to the Abuse of Older People (Elder Abuse) 2019-2029

www.communities.wa.gov.au/elderabuse

WA Strategy to Respond to the Abuse of Older People (Elder Abuse) 2019-2029

2019-2021 Progress Report Summary

<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/2019-2021-progress-report-summary>



Recommended Citation

Council on the Ageing (WA) Inc. (2022) 2022-2023 'Understanding the Mistreatment of Older People', Council on the Ageing (WA), Perth <http://www.cotawa.org.au>

Published by Council on the Ageing Western Australia and available at www.cotawa.org.au

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