



Hourglass

Safer ageing · Stopping abuse

Scotland

**ARE YOU WORRIED AN
OLDER PERSON IS BEING
HARMED OR ABUSED?**



Scotland

Hourglass

www.wearehourglass.org

Who we are

Hourglass Scotland is the only charity in Scotland dedicated to calling time on the harm, abuse and exploitation of older people. We support older people experiencing (or at risk of) harm, abuse or exploitation, and work towards safer ageing and a fairer society for all older people.

We provide a range of services via our Scotland-wide Community Hub, where older people (and those concerned about an older person) can access tailored and comprehensive support and advice around the abuse of older people and safer ageing. Based in Fife, but providing services across the whole of Scotland, we can support with casework, advocacy, information materials and access to our online Knowledge Bank – the UK’s first specialist knowledge bank specifically relating to the abuse of older people and safer ageing.

For those within reach of our Hub in Fife, we also offer a drop-in centre, one-to-one support from volunteers to support with recovery from abuse, and group-based support for older people.

Nationally, we also work to raise awareness of the abuse of older people to encourage those affected to speak up and seek support, and engage in campaigning work to advocate effective prevention and support.

Hourglass Helpline

Hourglass provides the UK’s only dedicated Helpline for those experiencing (or concerned about) the harm, abuse or exploitation of older people. Our Helpline is available Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. It’s entirely confidential and free to call from a landline or mobile and will not appear on your phone bill.

OUR HELPLINE NUMBER IS
0808 808 8141

Introduction

An estimated half million older people are harmed, abused and neglected every day in their own homes by people they thought they could trust.

Anyone can be at risk, but older people can be particularly vulnerable if they are dependent on others, experiencing health issues or frailty, or have a cognitive impairment such as dementia.

This booklet provides information on:

- different types of harm and abuse which older people may experience
- helping you understand why they may be reluctant to tell someone what is happening
- what you can do to help them.


What is the abuse of older people?

An estimated half million older people are harmed, abused and neglected every day in their own homes by people they thought they could trust.

Hourglass defines the abuse of older people 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 an older person or violates their human or civil rights”.

It can therefore include many types of harm, abuse, exploitation or neglect.



“I only found out he’d taken my car when the police came around after the accident.”

It might include:

- **Physical abuse**, e.g. physical force, hitting, pushing, rough handling, force-feeding, improper administration of medication, misusing restraint, etc.
- **Sexual abuse**, e.g. forcing someone to take part in any sexual activity without their consent, including intentional touching, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment and use of sexual language
- **Financial harm or abuse**, e.g. stealing money or possessions, having control over someone's money, fraud, forgery or embezzlement. It can also include putting pressure on people to make financial decisions they wouldn't otherwise make around wills, financial affairs, property or Power of Attorney. It might also include scams, including over the phone, by email, letter or at your doorstep.
- **Emotional, psychological or mental abuse**, e.g. bullying, threatening, persistently ignoring, intimidating, humiliating. It can also include depriving someone of their right to make everyday decisions, and who they see.
- **Neglecting an older person, or denying their basic needs**, e.g. help with going to the toilet, eating, getting dressed, medical needs, social needs, etc.

Some older people may also experience some of the above types of harm and abuse in the following ways:

- **Discriminatory abuse**, e.g. unfavourable treatment because of a person's age.
- **Institutional abuse**, e.g. poor processes or treatment in institutions such as care homes or hospitals, including any of the above forms of abuse, lack of privacy, no access to possessions or money, derogatory care.



Spotting the signs

The symptoms of harm, abuse and neglect are different for different people and different types of harm. Signs can include:

- Changes in behaviour, including aggression, anger or depression.
- Anxiety or withdrawal
- Not wanting to be left alone with someone
- Difficulty in getting access to the older person
- Unexplained or repeated injuries or falls
- Unexplained difficulty sitting or walking
- Deterioration in appearance or personal hygiene
- Inadequate food, drink or medical care
- Lack of money for basic necessities, or unexplained withdrawals from their bank account

Many people are cautious about getting involved in their friends' and neighbours' lives, but some people who have been harmed or abused can't get help for themselves and so rely on people around them to raise concerns.

"She took all my money and property, and left me with nothing."



Why might an older person be reluctant to seek help?

Talking about abuse and asking for help can be difficult at any time, but it can be even harder if an older person is reluctant to speak up if they are:

- Concerned that the abuser will get into trouble
- Worried they will be left on their own or lonely if they report the abuser, e.g. if their spouse/partner leaves them, or if they are denied access to grandchildren, other family or friends
- Embarrassed, or concerned that others may find out
- Feeling that they are a burden and the abuse is their fault
- Dependant on the abuser (for care, money or emotional support)
- Worried about reprisals or a worsening of the abuse
- Unable to find the words to explain what is happening
- Unaware of the services, support or care which could help them
- Worried that other options could be worse than their current abuse or neglect
- Lacking the information to make an informed decision

“It wasn’t my signature on the cheque, but no-one noticed and she cleared out my bank account.”



Others who may be able to help

If you're worried an older person might be experiencing harm or abuse but they won't talk to you about it, you could give them information about other people or agencies who they might be more comfortable speaking to. Some people prefer talking to someone they don't know, or someone they don't have a close relationship with, particularly if they are embarrassed. This could be a doctor or other health professional, a church elder or support worker, or one of the support organisations listed at the end of this booklet.

The older person may just want someone to talk to, but if they want someone to help stop what's happening, it's usually best to let their local council know so they can make arrangements to support and/or protect them (see the next section). You could offer to make the referral to the council for them, or one of the people listed above may also be able to do this for them.

What to do if you think an older person is being harmed or abused

If you believe someone is being harmed, abused or neglected, think about what advice and support you could get to help them. Many of the support services at the end of the leaflet may be able to help if you're not sure what to do for the best.

You might be able to support the older person yourself, or you may want to contact the council if you feel that they need more support or protection to keep them safe. It may be that a crime has been committed and that it is best for statutory services to be involved immediately.

Talk to the older person...

If you decide to talk the older person, always talk them to them in a safe and private place. Give them the opportunity to talk as much as they wish to, but be aware that they may deny there is a problem.

Listen to them sensitively, but be careful that you don't ask leading questions. Tell them why you're concerned - you don't have to accuse anyone of anything. Don't discuss the subject with or challenge the abuser, especially if the older person doesn't want you to.



Get advice...

Getting help from a support organisation

You can contact the Hourglass Helpline for confidential advice and support. You can also contact any of the organisations listed at the end of this booklet for advice or support for yourself or the older person you are concerned about. They may be able to give you advice on possible options, tell you more about the process of reporting to the council (or even report to the council on your behalf). Some may be able to meet in person with your or the older person to discuss what is happening.

Take legal advice

Unless the older person has already done so, you might want to seek legal advice for things like:

- Setting up or changing a will or power of attorney
- Trying to recover money or property
- Untangling a legal arrangement they have been tricked or bullied into
- Advice on pressing charges and criminal proceedings
- Property and inheritance issues.

It may be possible to get legal aid to help with the costs. Even if the older person isn't ready to seek help (or doesn't want you to seek legal advice), it may still be helpful to get more information about their options in case they want to do something later.

Ask someone else to report the harm

If you want to report what has happened, but you or the person you're worried about don't want to contact the council, you could tell someone else who can help. This could be a doctor or other health professional, a carer, or someone at your church. They can make a referral to the council on your behalf. If you'd prefer speaking to someone you don't know, you can also ask helpline operators, such as Hourglass Scotland, to make a referral for you.

Check to see if someone has the authority to make decisions on behalf of the older person

If you have concerns about someone who is making welfare or financial decisions on behalf of an older person, you can contact the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) to find out if they have Power of Attorney to have the authority to make such decisions. Even if they do have power of attorney, you can let the OPG know if you have any concerns about the person.

For financial attorneys, the OPG may then look into the situation and carry out an investigation if necessary if they think the older person might be at risk. For welfare attorneys, the Mental Welfare Commission (MWC) can carry out investigations. You can get contact details for the OPG and MWC at the end of this booklet.

Ask the council for an assessment of the older person's needs

Not all cases of harm, abuse or neglect will be treated as adult support and protection referrals. This is because the law only covers vulnerable adults who are at risk of harm (the law includes criteria for deciding who might be vulnerable). It's usually best to let the council decide if the older person meets this definition, but even if they don't the council may still be able to help in other ways. If he/she hasn't already had one, you could ask for an assessment of their care needs to help the council decide what support they might need.

Contact a regulatory body

If you have concerns about a paid carer or healthcare worker (or the services provided by a health or care provider), you could report them to the relevant regulatory body. It is usually best to speak to the worker's manager/employer first, but you can also go through the organisation's complaints procedure or formally report them to the regulatory body. Here are the agencies you can contact:

- Concerns about individual care workers - the Scottish Social Services Council.
- Concerns about social care services – the Care Inspectorate.
- Concerns about social work services – your local authority.
- Concerns about individual healthcare workers – the relevant professional body.
- Concerns about NHS healthcare – the NHS complaints procedure.
- Private healthcare services – directly with the provider, or via the relevant professional body.



Seek support or protection

If you think someone is experiencing serious harm or abuse, or they are in immediate physical danger, you should contact the emergency services straight away. If you need to contact the emergency services urgently, you should call 999. If you want to report a non-urgent incident to the police, you can either call 101 or call or visit your local police station directly.

You should be aware that if the police gather enough evidence to satisfy them that a crime has been committed, they will arrest the perpetrator – regardless of whether you or the victim want to press charges. They may also contact the local social work department who might decide to make an adult support and protection investigation (see below).

For all other concerns, you can report what is happening to the local council's social work department (either anonymously, or giving your name) who can take action to support and/or protect them. This will be treated as an adult support and protection referral, and allows the council to take steps to investigate what is happening.

The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 gives councils powers to take steps to support and/or protect adults who are at risk of harm. Once the council becomes aware that someone might be at risk, they might decide to make inquiries or carry out an investigation to:

- find out more about what has happened
- check whether they are at risk of further harm; and
- see if they need any support and/or protection.

The action they might take will depend on the adult's circumstances, and as far as possible they will try to consult with them about what to do. If they decide to make inquiries or an investigation, this might involve asking them and/or you questions, interviewing the person who is harming them or people who know them, looking at their medical or financial records, or asking a health professional to examine them. They will only take these measures if there is a good reason to, and the older person can refuse to answer any questions or undergo a medical examination if they don't want to.

Once the council has finished its inquiries/investigations, staff will decide what support (if any) the older person might need. This might include:

- making sure they have access to appropriate health care services
- personal care support
- help with their finances
- counselling
- support for the person who is caring for them
- housing support
- referring them to an independent advocacy organisation.

They may also decide at any point to take measures to protect the older person if they are concerned about their safety. This might include contacting the emergency services or applying to the court for a banning order (banning the abuser from coming near them for a certain time period), or a removal order (taking them to a safer place for a short period).

If the older person is unsure about reporting what is happening to the council, remember that the council's main interest is in supporting and protecting vulnerable adults, and they should always consider the least restrictive action.



Support for black and minority ethnic (BME) groups

BME groups may experience specific issues in relation to harm and abuse, and some people may find it harder to access information and support due to language or cultural difficulties. For some ethnic groups, a traditional reliance on family can leave them particularly vulnerable to various types of harm and abuse.

Trust Housing Association run an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Programme for older people which offers leaflets on elder abuse in various languages, including:

- Chinese
- Punjabi
- Bengali
- Arabi
- Urdu
- Hindi

You can download the booklets at www.equalityscotland.com or call them on **0131 444 4942** to request one.



Organisations who can help

SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Abused men in Scotland (AMIS) helpline

A national organisation dedicated to supporting men who are experiencing, or who have experienced, domestic abuse.

Helpline: 0808 800 0024
Email: contact@amis.org.uk
Website: www.abusedmeninscotland.org

Hourglass Scotland

A specialist organisation that focuses exclusively on the abuse of older people. If you phone this number it will not appear on your telephone bill.

Helpline: 080 8808 8141
Email: scotland@wearehourglass.org
Website: www.wearehourglass.scot

Alzheimer Scotland 24 hour Dementia helpline

A service for people with dementia, carers, relatives, professionals, and anyone concerned about dementia.

Helpline: 0808 808 3000
Email: info@alzscot.org
Website: www.alzscot.org

Carers Scotland Advice Line

A helpline to support people who care for an elderly, sick or disabled family member or friend.

Helpline: 0808 808 7777
Email: adviceline@carersuk.org
Website: www.carersuk.org/scotland

Citizens Advice Bureau

Call Citizens Advice Direct or visit the Citizens Advice Scotland website to find your local bureau.

Helpline: 0808 800 9060
Website: www.cas.org.uk/bureaux

Money Advice Service

A free and impartial service to help people manage their finances directly, and make the most of their money.

Helpline: 0800 138 7777
Website: www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk

Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline

Telephone information and support to anyone affected by domestic abuse or forced marriage. It is open 24 hours a day 365 days a year.

Helpline: 0800 027 1234

Silver Line Scotland helpline

A confidential, freephone helpline for older people, available every day of the year. It provides information, friendship & advice to older people and those seeking advice on how best to support older friends and family.

Helpline: 0800 4 70 80 90
Website: www.thesilverline.org.uk

Trust Housing Association (THA)

THA's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Programme offer a range of support and information for older people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Tel: 0131 444 1200
Website: www.equalityscotland.com

Victim Support Scotland

Provides support and information services to victims and witnesses of crime.

Helpline: 0800 160 1985
Website: www.victimsupportsco.org.uk

Women's Aid helpline

A national charity working to end domestic violence against women and children.

Helpline: 0808 2000 247
Email: helpline@womensaid.org.uk
Website: www.womensaid.org.uk

STATUTORY SERVICES

Council Social work departments

Look in the phone book/internet or call Hourglass Scotland or Silver Line Scotland who can find the number for you.

Police Scotland

Emergency calls: 999
Non-emergency calls: 101

Regulatory bodies

The Care Inspectorate

Regulates and inspects care services in Scotland to make sure that they meet the right standards.

Tel: 0345 600 9527
Email: enquiries@careinspectorate.com
Website: www.careinspectorate.com

The Mental Welfare Commission

Protects and promote the human rights of people with mental health problems, learning disabilities, dementia and related conditions.

Advice line: 0800 389 6809
Email: enquiries@mwscot.org.uk
Website: www.mwscot.org.uk

Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)

Registers and regulates key groups of social service workers, promote and regulate education and training.

Tel: 0345 60 30 891
Website: www.sssc.uk.com

Office of the Public Guardian (Scotland)

Supervises those individuals who have been appointed to manage the financial or property affairs of adults who lack the capacity to do so for themselves.

Tel: 01324 678300
Email: opg@scotcourts.gov.uk
Website: www.publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk



How Hourglass can support you

Hourglass is the only UK-wide charity dedicated to stopping the harm, abuse and exploitation of older people and promote safer ageing.

The Hourglass confidential helpline provides information and support to anyone concerned about harm, abuse or exploitation of an older person. This might include physical, financial, psychological, sexual or neglect.

The helpline is available in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to provide a tailored service to callers from across the UK. Our trained Information Officers can provide information, advice and support and put you in touch with appropriate local agencies.

Our Helpline is available from 9am to 5pm every Monday to Friday, offering:

- support for older people who have experienced, or are at risk of, any kind of harm, abuse or exploitation.
- support for anyone concerned about an older person, e.g family, friends, neighbours, carers or health professionals, etc.
- information and advice relating to safer ageing and prevention.

The Hourglass helpline is entirely confidential, free to call from a landline or mobile, and the number won't appear on the phone bill.

0808 808 8141

“I only found out he'd taken my car when the police came around after the accident.”





Hourglass

Safer ageing · Stopping abuse

You can contact us in many ways:

24/7 Helpline: 0808 808 8141

Our helpline is entirely confidential and free to call from a landline or mobile, and the number will not appear on your phone bill.

Text message: 07860 052906

Texts from outside the UK will be charged at their standard international rate which will differ depending on location and service charges of your phone provider. The number will appear on your bill and in your phone records but will not be identified as Hourglass.

INSTANT MESSAGING service: www.wearehourglass.org

Get information from our CHATBOT - www.wearehourglass.org

Get information from our KNOWLEDGE BANK - knowledgebank.wearehourglass.org

Email: helpline@wearehourglass.org

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