

Identifying, Responding to & Preventing Elder Abuse

Northern Rivers Abuse of Older Adults Prevention Project



Northern Rivers Abuse of Older Adults Prevention Project

- Funded by the Attorney-General's Department of the Commonwealth Government under the National Community Crime Prevention Programme (NCCPP)
- Duration of project is 2 years (Jan 07- Jan 09)
- Northern Rivers region- Grafton to Tweed, which has the highest ageing population in NSW



Abuse of Older Adults Prevention Project



Project Objectives

- Develop partnerships to involve the community in the planning and implementation of the Elder Abuse Prevention Project
- Develop a training and education package for aged care service providers to aide in the identification and awareness of elder abuse cases
- Development of a local framework to assist in clarifying roles, responsibilities, and points of contact in referring suspected cases of elder abuse.
- To increase the capacity of communities to deal with elder abuse by developing public awareness of the nature, prevalence and impact of elder abuse.
- Increase the capacity of an existing telephone service to respond to cases of older adult abuse



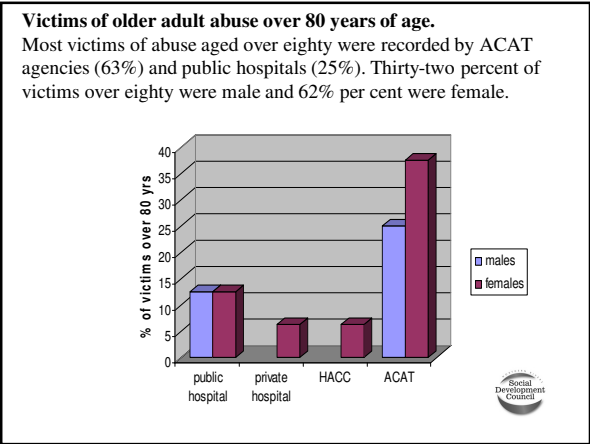
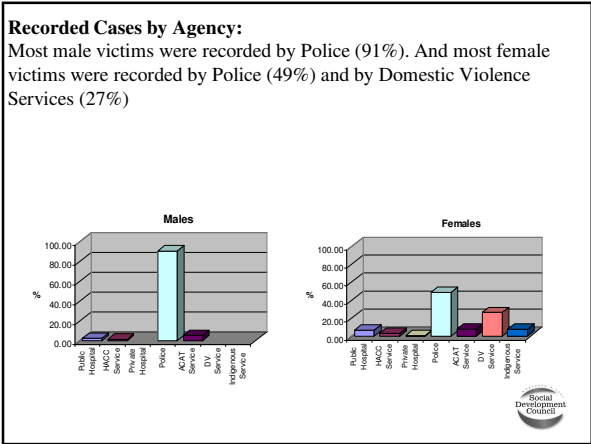
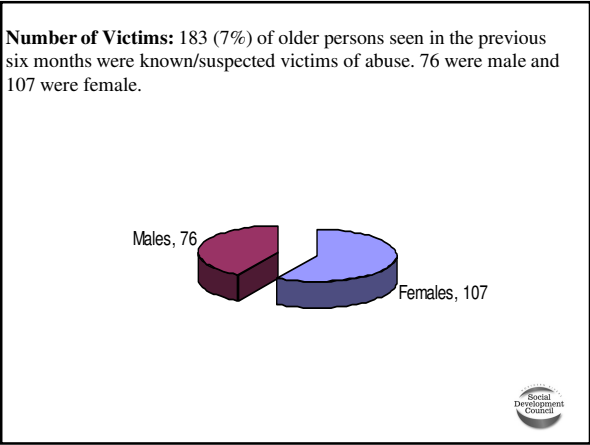
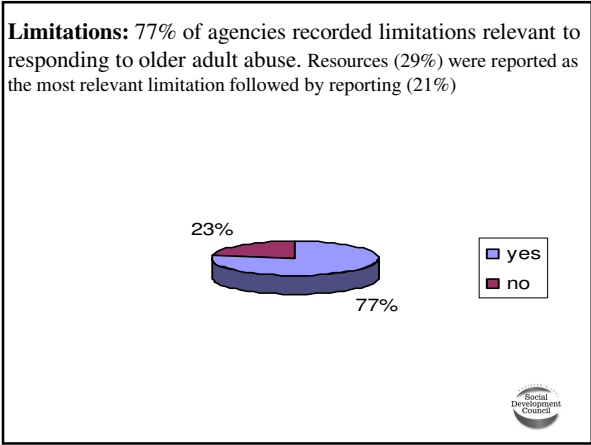
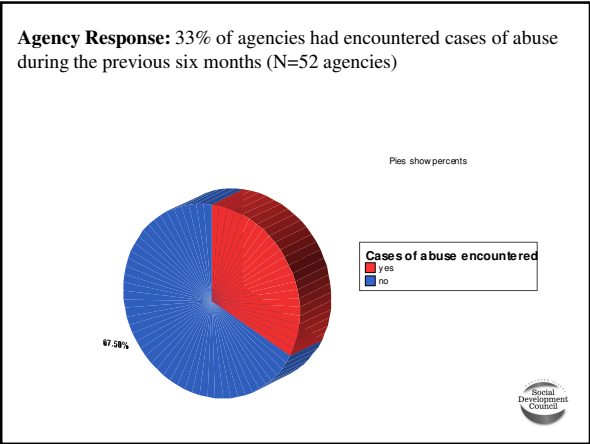
Key Activities of the Project:

- Initial consultation 2005
- Empirical research (quantitative and qualitative)
- Working party
- Consultation – Aboriginal Communities & Service Provider Forums/Workshops
- Develop interagency response process- identification of key referral agency.
- Memorandum of Understanding

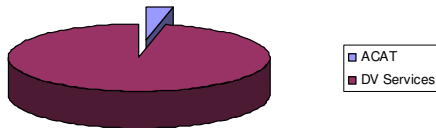
Key Activities of the Project (cont):

- Develop education/training manual
- Advertising campaign –Focus on prevention and education
- Public forums
- Respond to emerging needs of N.R communities e.g. financial abuse prevention committee

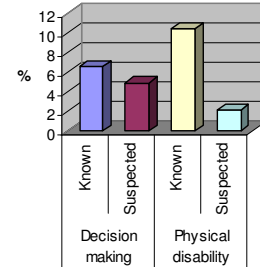
Older Adults Abuse in Northern NSW Empirical Findings



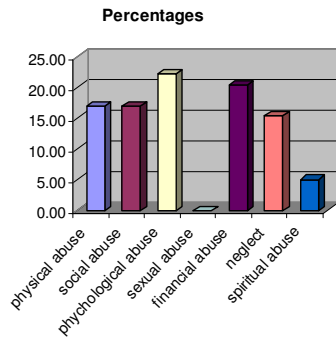
Victims of older adult abuse between 61-65 yrs of age
 More than 90% of victims of abuse aged between 61 and 65 were recorded by domestic violence services.



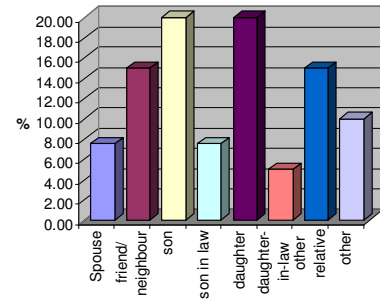
Disability: 7% elder abuse victims had a decision-making disability, and 11% had a physical disability. Of the 44 victims of abuse that were known to have a disability, 73% had carers.



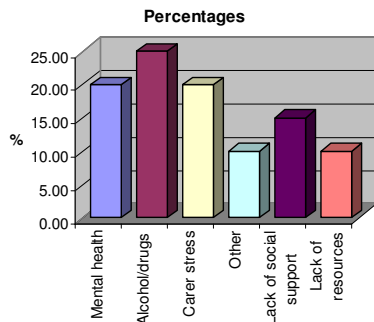
Type of Abuse: Most abuse seen by agencies was psychological abuse (22%) and financial abuse (20%). Sexual abuse was recorded the least (2%).



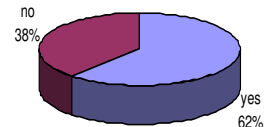
Perpetrators: Sons (20%) and daughters (20%) of older persons were identified most often as the perpetrators of abuse, followed by other relatives (15%) and friends/neighbours (15%).

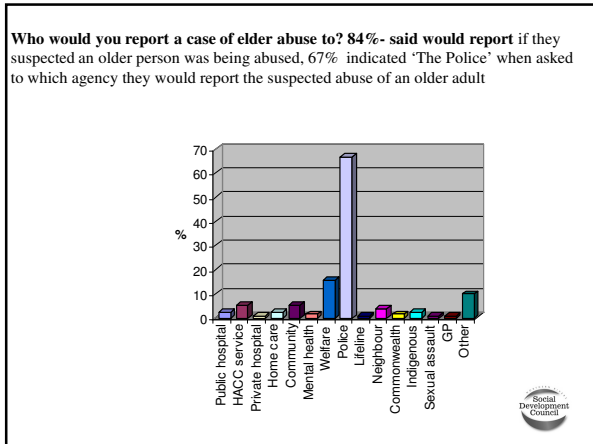
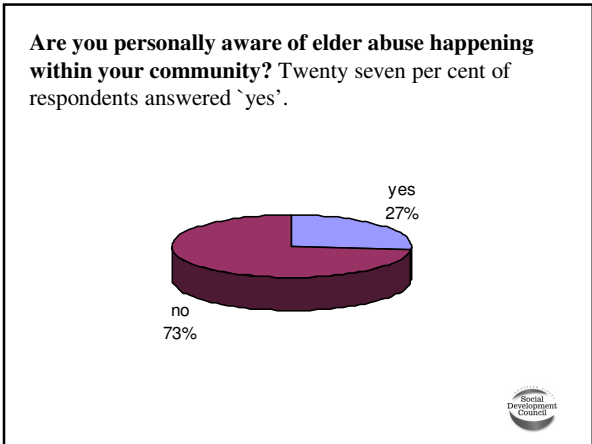


Main causes of abuse Alcohol/drugs (25%) were listed as the main cause of older adult abuse, followed closely by mental health (20%), and carer stress (20%).



Community Members: Have you heard of older adult abuse? Most respondents (62%) said yes, while 38% said no.





- ### Summary of Key Findings
- Police play a pivotal role in responding to cases of elder abuse, along with ACAT and DV services
 - Resources are a main limitation of responding to elder abuse cases
 - Financial and psychological abuse prevention strategies
 - Further research needs to be conducted to identify those at risk of being abused and those at risk of perpetrating abuse
 - Carer stress reduction strategies need to be identified

- ### Key Issues for Service Providers
- Emergency and non-urgent responses
 - Mental capacity and consent
 - Privacy, Confidentiality, and Duty of Care
 - Confirming suspicion of abuse- Elder Abuse Suspicion Index
 - Cultural Issues
 - Understanding the abuse within a historical context
 - Deliberate abuse or misinformation?

- ### Roles of all services
- Act in a timely manner
 - Identify cases of older adult abuse
 - Refer suspected, disclosed or known cases of abuse to appropriate services or authorities
 - Provide information and support for victims of older adult abuse
 - Provide a culturally appropriate services

Responding to Older Adult Abuse

Abuse of Older Adults Interagency Manual 2008— Contents

Introduction and Background

- Introduction
- How this Manual was developed
- Purpose of the Manual
- Interagency Protocol - NSW Government (Office for Ageing, DADHC)

Defining the abuse of older adults

- Types of older adult abuse
- Risk factors for older adult abuse

Key Issues for responding to older adult abuse

- Emergency and non-urgent responses
- Mental capacity and consent
- Confidentiality and Duty of Care
- Documentation
- Protecting evidence for NSW Police

Identifying the needs of specific groups

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- CALD clients

Principles for responding to the abuse of older adults

- Principles for Intervention
- Principles for Reporting Abuse to NSW Police

Developing policies and procedures for responding to the abuse of older adults

- How to develop a policy and procedure for responding to older adult abuse
- Sample procedure for Frontline Workers
- Sample procedure for Supervisors/Managers

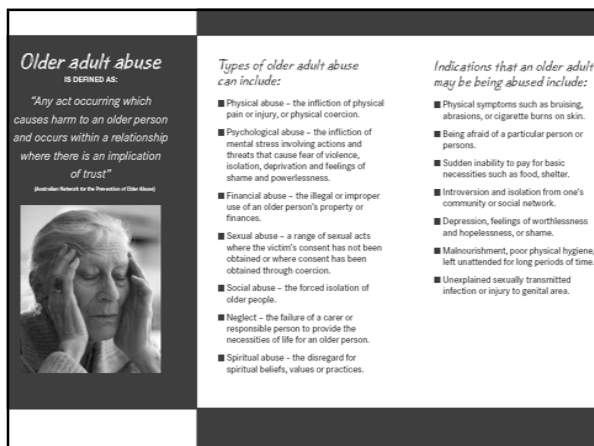
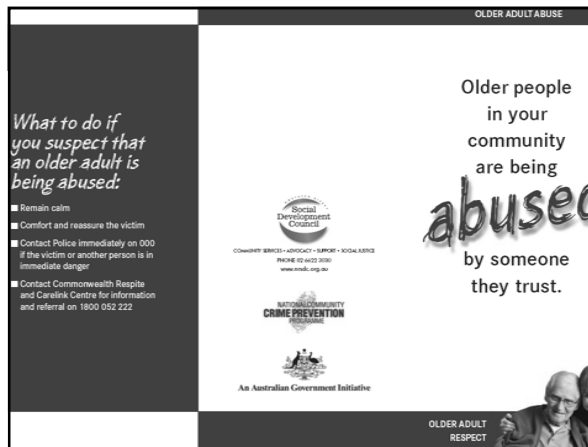
Roles of services and agencies in responding to older adult abuse

- Role of key NSW Government departments in responding to older adult abuse

References

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Case Studies
- Appendix 2 Referral Agencies and Other Useful Contacts
- Appendix 3 United Nations Principles for Responding to Older Adult Abuse
- Appendix 4 Australian Research
- Appendix 5 Supplementary contacts for the Northern Rivers Region, NSW




Financial abuse

IS DEFINED AS:

"The illegal or improper use of a person's finances or property by another person with whom they have a relationship in which there is an implication of trust"

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Examples of financial abuse include:

- Coercing, forcing or pressuring an older person to sign documents such as wills or powers of attorney
- Missing powers of attorney
- Managing, without permission, the finances of a competent older person
- Pressuring an older person for money or an anticipated inheritance
- Incurring bills for which the older person is responsible
- Using an older person's credit cards, key cards, and other financial documents without their permission
- Stealing property from the older person including jewellery, money, or food

Signs of financial abuse include the following:

- Sudden inability to pay for basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, bills
- Unexplained withdrawals from accounts or unexplained transfer of funds
- Inability to access bank statements or to locate cheque books, credit cards, or bank correspondence

- Improper attainment or misuse of Power of Attorney or Enduring Power of Attorney
- Loss of material items such as jewellery, furniture, or cash

Tips on how to reduce the risk of being financially abused:

- Manage your own financial matters for as long as possible
- Plan for the future, and ensure that those around you are aware of your wishes
- Seek independent advice from a trusted person outside the family when making changes to your financial or living arrangements
- Try to avoid making important legal and financial decisions, or signing documents under pressure. Wait until you have all the information you need.
- Obtain legal advice before signing any important documents
- Continue to remain active in the community, and keep connected to your network of family, friends and neighbours.
- Avoid making important financial and legal decisions after big life events such as the loss of a loved one, or relocation.


Older Adult Abuse

Where can I find out more information about Enduring Power of Attorney, and Enduring Guardianship?

Your future is in your hands...

Safeguarding your future.


- For more information, contact the Guardianship Tribunal:
Toll free: 1800 14 3998
Main switch: (02) 9555 8500
- LegalAid Northern Rivers: 02 6621 2082
- Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre: 1800 589 889
- Lismore & District Financial Counselling Service 02 66222171
- Your local solicitor

Older Adult Report

www.nrsdc.org.au

Northern Rivers Abuse of Older Adults Prevention Project




Lead roles of key NSW Government departments

- NSW Police:** Emergency intervention and investigation of criminal offences
- Aged Care Assessment Teams and Aged Care Services:** Comprehensive assessment and care coordination
- Hospitals (acute care staff):** Emergency and ongoing medical treatment
- Sexual Assault Services:** Response to sexual abuse and care coordination
- Mental Health Services:** Mental health issues and case management
- Domestic Violence Services:** Domestic violence issues - support, information and referral
- Guardianship Tribunal:** Appointment of substitute decision makers and consenting to medical treatment for adults who lack capacity to make their own decisions

Safeguarding Against Abuse

- Manage your own financial matters for as long as possible
- Plan for the future, and ensure that those around you are aware of your wishes
- Seek independent advice from a trusted person outside the family
- Avoid making important legal and financial decisions, or signing documents under pressure. Wait until you have all the information you need
- Obtain legal advice before signing any important documents
- Continue to remain active in the community, and keep connected to your network of family, friends and neighbours.
- Avoid making important financial and legal decisions after major life events such as the loss of a loved one, or relocation.



Resources

- ACSA *Elder Abuse: A Holistic Response* background paper, *Confronting Elder Abuse* position paper; policies and procedures resource guide www.agedcare.org.au
- ACT Elder Abuse Information and Referral Service
- Boldy, D (2002, Curtin University)
- Queensland Elder Abuse Prevention Unit (EAPU) www.eapu.com.au
- Seniors Advocacy Information and Legal Service (SAILS) www.caxton.org.au/services
- South Australia ARAS: Abuse Prevention Program www.sa.agedrights.asn.au/prevent
- Western Australia Advocate: Elder Abuse Prevention Program www.advocare.org.au
- VIC new Community Education and Older Person's Legal Service

Acknowledgement: Images courtesy of Dr Susan Kurrle, Hornsby Hospital

