

Early Indicators of Concern in Residential and Nursing Homes for Older People

A Guide

The *Abuse in Care?* Project

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Introduction

This guide has been developed following detailed research into known cases where abuse took place in residential services and nursing homes for older people. Analysis of these cases produced a series of indicators of concern and found that these indicators fell into six distinct areas. Abuse or neglect was found to be associated with situations where practitioners had identified a number of indicators of concern spread over a range of these six areas. The findings from this project suggest that we should be most concerned when such a ***spread or range*** of indicators is identified.

This Guide presents the six areas of concern and gives some of the commonly occurring examples reported by practitioners during the research. There is then a further sheet that can be used to collect information and reflect on the risks that might be present in a service. You can access detailed accounts of the areas of concern and the research [here](#).

The indicators can be used in one of three ways. An individual can use the sheets to record and structure concerns. A group of people, including families and professionals can use the sheets to collect concerns about a service from different sources. A team from a service can use the sheets to review and reflect on their own service. We suggest a simple but essential process:

Record - Reflect - Talk to Someone - ACT

There are two other important notes:

1. A pattern of concerns is not proof of abuse and abuse can happen when concerns aren't apparent. This is a guide to help people to record, reflect, talk to someone and ACT. It is based on evidence and experience from examples where abuse did occur and these indicators were present but not acted upon.
2. The use of this guide does not replace listening directly to people in services. On the contrary, it gives an important reason to listen more closely before and after concerns are raised.

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Early Indicators of Concern in Residential and Nursing Homes for Older People

Examples from the Research		
<p>1. Concerns about management and leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of leadership by managers, for example managers do not make decisions or set priorities • The service/home is not being managed in a planned way, but reacts to problems or crises • Managers appear unaware of serious problems in the service • The manager is new and doesn't appear to understand what the service is set up to do • A responsible manager is not apparent or available within the service. 	<p>2. Concerns about staff skills, knowledge and practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff appear to lack the information, skills and knowledge to support older people/people with dementia • Staff appear challenged by some residents' behaviours and do not know how to support them effectively • Members of staff are controlling of residents • Members of staff use negative or judgemental language when talking about residents • Record keeping by staff is poor 	<p>3. Concerns about residents' behaviours and wellbeing</p> <p>One or more of the residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show signs of injury through lack of care or attention • Appear frightened or show signs of fear • Behaviours have changed • Moods or psychological presentation have changed
<p>4. Concerns about the service resisting the involvement of external people and isolating individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers/staff do not respond to advice or guidance from practitioners and families who visit the service • The service is not reporting concerns or serious incidents to families, external practitioners or agencies • Staff or managers appear defensive or hostile when questions or problems are raised by external professionals or families 	<p>5. Concerns about the way services are planned and delivered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of clarity about the purpose and nature of the service • The service is accepting residents whose needs they appear unable to meet • Residents' needs as identified in assessments, care plans or risk assessments are not being met • The layout of the building does not easily allow residents to socialise and be with other people 	<p>6. Concerns about the quality of basic care and the environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service is not providing a safe environment • There is a lack of activities or social opportunities for residents • Residents do not have as much money as would be expected • Equipment is not being used or is not being used correctly • The home is dirty and shows signs of poor hygiene

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Name of Service		
1. Concerns about management and leadership	2. Concerns about staff skills, knowledge and practice	3. Concerns about residents' behaviours and wellbeing
4. Concerns about the service resisting the involvement of external people and isolating individuals	5. Concerns about the way services are planned and delivered	6. Concerns about the quality of basic care and the environment