



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



OPEN YOUR EYES

to Elder Abuse in Your Community



**A Guide to Organising a Group Viewing of the
'Open Your Eyes to Elder Abuse in Your Community' DVD**

There's No Excuse for Elder Abuse

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Introduction

This guide has been developed to assist you in organising a group viewing of the DVD, 'Open Your Eyes to Elder Abuse in Your Community', incorporating some group discussion to promote greater understanding of this difficult and sensitive issue. This DVD has been designed so that no specialist experience or training is required to deliver a viewing to a group.

It is cause for celebration that people in Ireland are living longer and remaining healthy as they do so. The vast majority of older people live happy, independent and fulfilling lives.

A small number of older people need care and this care is provided by relatives and professionals in a responsible and loving way. However, some older people do suffer abuse and the risk of abuse increases as people become more dependent or their health deteriorates. Everybody has the right to lead a life of dignity, free from abuse, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background, religion, political persuasion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age. All older people have a right to be supported to live a meaningful life connected to family and friends. All of us who have regular contact with older people have an important role to play in protecting and promoting this right.

Abuse of older people can be perpetrated by anyone.

This DVD focuses on abuse in relationships where there is an expectation of trust. In such relationships, abuse is more likely to happen in the home at the hands of a family member, a professional, a paid or volunteer carer or a neighbour.

This programme has been designed to help people to recognise the signs of elder abuse and to know what practical steps to take if elder abuse is suspected or discovered. There is often a great deal of stress for carers, especially lone carers, and this can result in unacceptable behaviour patterns even among the well-intentioned. Sometimes people don't realise they are committing acts of abuse and the behaviour just needs to be highlighted for it to end.

People experiencing abusive treatment often try to protect or excuse their abusers, or conceal the abuse, particularly when it happens in the context of a family relationship. Early intervention can be a relief for both parties and can help restore relationships. It can prevent the abuse from becoming more severe and it can lead to increased supports, better coping strategies, skills and respite for carers. Getting as much information as possible and seeking support can alleviate the problem of abuse or, better still, avoid it entirely.

How to Use This Guide

You should read this guide in full before organising a group viewing of the DVD.

The guide will assist you:

- in introducing the DVD to your audience,
- in providing key facts on elder abuse in Ireland
- in managing some group discussion after the viewing of the DVD.

The Guide is divided into four sections:

- Preparation and Planning in Advance of the Viewing
- The Viewing
- Concluding the Session
- Considerations for Specific Groups (carers, caring for someone with dementia and older people - protecting yourself)

Preparation and Planning in Advance of the Viewing

1. Identify your objectives and target group

Think about what you want the audience to get out of the session, including:

- Increased awareness of elder abuse and how it presents in the community;
- Knowledge of types of elder abuse and what factors can contribute to it;
- An understanding that early intervention is key;
- Knowing what to do and where to go when there are concerns.

2. Decisions about your viewing

- Who are you targeting to attend?
- Ensure audience is clear on the nature of the content beforehand.
- Decide - when, where, and for how many, with a view to accommodating your target group.

- Book your venue, ensure sufficient space, chairs etc. and organise refreshments and audiovisual equipment as required.
- Publicise the viewing.

3. Viewing the DVD

- 'Test drive' before the viewing – ensure the DVD, DVD player and TV you will use are working, that you are familiar with the content and how long each section will take.
- Prepare to get your audience to agree 'ground rules' (e.g. listen to each other, respecting each others views even if they are different from our own, agreeing not to discuss outside of the group anything personal that is shared). See the section on ground rules for further suggestions.
- Prepare your introduction to the DVD. In your introduction make sure your audience are aware that viewing this DVD may be upsetting. Some of your audience may have first hand experience of some of these types of situations and this viewing may be emotional for them.
- Scenarios in the DVD are:

Dan & Hilda

Lily & Seán

Margaret & Claire

Roger & Gráinne

4. Preparation for post-viewing group discussion

This can be the most challenging part. The personal stories may stir up emotions and memories for those present. Given the prevalence of elder abuse it may be that an audience member has personally suffered elder abuse. Through watching the DVD a person may come to the realisation for the first time that they have been abused, neglected or mistreated or that their own behaviour could be considered abusive.

The purpose of post viewing discussion is not to go into real life examples from your audience, but to allow people to discuss the topic and the issues in a supportive environment with peers.

In the next section, you are provided with sample discussion questions to help get your group talking about the issue. You may find this helpful if you have a quiet group and need to get the talking started.

You should review these discussion pointers before the session and consider how you (or others) might answer each question. The sample discussion questions are just a guide. If your group is actively participating, not all questions may be needed.

You should let your group know in advance that there will be discussion after the DVD. You may like to share the questions with them in advance.

Some people may be uncomfortable speaking out in a group situation. Therefore, it can be helpful to ask people to get into groups of twos and threes to discuss the issues that the DVD has covered. They can nominate someone from the small group to provide feedback to the larger group.

This means that no one person feels under pressure to speak in front of the larger group.

Someone may open up about their own experiences of elder abuse during the group discussion. If this happens, you do not need to come up with answers to 'fix the problem', but you should acknowledge the person's courage in sharing their experience, acknowledge their distress, and encourage them to speak to someone they trust about the abuse.

Anyone in need of support or advice should contact the HSE information line for details of specialist staff in their area who will be able to help.

Anyone disclosing serious abuse should be encouraged to contact the Gardaí.

5. Prepare what further information you will need

- Elder Abuse Awareness booklets;
- Contact details for the HSE INFORMATION LINE – 1850 24 1850 (Monday-Saturday 8am-8pm);
- Further information on elder abuse can be found on the HSE website: www.hse.ie/go/elderabuse
- The National Centre for the Protection of Older People carries out research relating to elder abuse in Ireland. web: www.ncpop.ie

The Viewing

1. Introducing the DVD to the group

This DVD has been developed to raise awareness of elder abuse within community settings in Ireland. Different types of abuse are shown to help viewers recognise when and where abuse may be happening.

This DVD highlights the stress that carers, especially lone carers, can experience and highlights the importance of early intervention and assistance in improving these situations. The DVD outlines the practical steps to take if you are concerned about abuse, and the various supports that may be offered.

This DVD shows the importance of everyone who has contact with older people being vigilant and alert to signs of possible abuse, and where abuse is suspected to take action.

We are given an insight into the lives of some older people and see their difficulties. Although the scenarios are depicted by professional actors, these cases are representative of what the specialist elder abuse HSE staff deal with regularly.

No one is immune to elder abuse. Many older people don't realise that what is happening to them is abuse.

2. Discuss and agree ground rules

Your group should discuss and agree ground rules before viewing the DVD.

For Example:-

- What is said in the room is confidential (i.e. personal information that people share should be kept confidential and not discussed outside of the session or shared with anyone else).
- Listen when someone else is speaking.
- Respect everyone's opinion even if it is different from your own. People can have different views/opinions, it is ok to disagree but not to ridicule others.
- Take the discussions seriously.
- Respect each other's feelings.
- There is no pressure to contribute to the discussion if you don't wish to contribute.

Note on confidentiality:

Confidentiality is often one of the first ground rules suggested. The group leader should explain to the participants at the start that she/he cannot guarantee unconditional confidentiality if something comes up in the programme that they feel they need to seek advice on or talk to someone else about in relation to someone's welfare and safety.

3. Elder abuse - facts

What is elder abuse?

A single or repeated act, or lack of action on the part of a trusted person, that leads to harm or distress for the older person.

It can be:-

- Physical abuse (hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, inappropriate restraint);
- Psychological or Emotional abuse (repeated threats of harm or abandonment, depriving of social contact, humiliation, intimidation, coercion);
- Sexual abuse (sexual acts to which the older person has not consented);
- Neglect (ignoring medical or physical care needs, withholding medication, adequate nutrition or heating);
- Financial abuse (theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, inheritance, power of attorney or financial transactions; or misuse of property, possessions or benefits).
- Discriminatory abuse (ageism, racism, sexism, that based on a person's disability and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment).

Key facts

- Over 2,000 people about whom there are concerns of elder abuse are assisted by the specialist HSE elder abuse service every year.
- Over 10,000 people in Ireland are estimated to suffer some form of elder abuse every year.
- Many cases go unreported.
- In almost 90% of cases the perpetrator is a family member, mostly adult children and spouses.
- Financial abuse is very common.
- Women and the 'older old' are most at risk.

4. Post-viewing group discussion – starter questions

- What types of abuse did you recognise in each scenario?

Dan & Hilda

Lily & Seán

Margaret & Claire

Roger & Gráinne

- For each scenario what do you think you would like to see happen? What do you think can be done to improve the situation?

Dan & Hilda

Lily & Seán

Margaret & Claire

Roger & Gráinne

- Did you observe any ageism (age discrimination) in these scenarios? Give examples.
- Think about the scenarios depicted, would you have considered calling the Gardaí in any of these cases?
- What positives did you observe in any of the scenarios?

Concluding the Session

- Thank your group for attending.
- Provide copies of the Elder Abuse awareness leaflet (contact 061 461 358 if you need more of these).
- Provide details of the HSE information line who can direct you to specialist staff in your area (1850 24 1850).
- Anyone with serious or immediate concerns about the safety of an older person should be advised to contact the Gardaí.

Considerations for Specific Groups

Carers:

Carers don't have to cope alone. Noticing when carers are under stress, and helping them find support and solutions can mean avoiding situations where abuse can occur.

Early intervention can lead to better supports for a carer and repair the relationship between a carer and a dependent person. Intervention can be a relief to both the abused and the abuser. If the difficulties carers encounter can be recognised early, appropriate supports can be put in place.

Key issues for Carers in coping with stress include:

- Family/Supports
- Health
- Practical problems
- Emotions
- Coping strategies
- Sense of recognition as a Carer

The Carers Association National Careline

FREEPHONE 1800 24 07 24 Monday to Friday, 9am - 5.30pm.

Caring for someone with dementia:

Dementia is characterised by a gradual deterioration in memory and in the person's ability to carry out everyday activities, make decisions, understand information and express themselves. Dementia may also affect a person's mood and personality. A person with dementia can often feel vulnerable and in need of reassurance and support. The people closest to them can help but often need support and reassurance to do so.

People caring for those with dementia need specific guidance and information. Often abuse arising in these situations may be unintentional and meant to protect the older person. Immobilising a person or locking someone in a safe room could be considered abusive. Over medicating an older person to make them docile could be abuse even if you think it's for their own benefit.

Being alert to possible abuse can lead to a solution for the abuser as well as the person at risk of abuse.

Supports available:

To find out more about what is available in your area you can contact your local Public Health Nurse through your local HSE office, or you can call:

HSE Information Line
1850 24 1850,
Monday to Saturday,
8am to 8pm.

**The Alzheimer
National Helpline**
Freephone 1800 341 341,
Monday to Friday,
10am to 4pm.

Older People – protecting yourself!:

If you are delivering this session with a group of older people it can be helpful to use this opportunity to discuss how older people can protect themselves from abuse.

- Stay connected - Maintain contact with family, friends and neighbours, get involved with groups and organisations.
- Maintain your independence.
- Familiarise yourself with supports available and how to access them.
- Keep control of your finances, your phone and open and post your own mail.
- Be aware of the risks of living with someone who abuses substances(alcohol/drugs).
- Look after your health.
- Plan for the future – discuss your wishes (in the event that you may not have the capacity to make decision as to your care and treatment in the future) with someone you trust and write them down.

- Never let yourself be rushed into a deal.
- Be vigilant of callers to your door presenting themselves as charity representatives, employees of a credit institution or awarding you a prize or gift.
- Be aware of scams that look for personal or financial information.

OPEN YOUR EYES

to Elder Abuse in Your Community

A guide to organising a group viewing of the DVD

The 'Open Your Eyes to Elder Abuse in Your Community' DVD has been developed to raise awareness of the issue of elder abuse within community settings. Different types of abuse are portrayed in order to help viewers identify when abuse may be occurring. It includes practical steps to take if you are concerned about abuse as well as supports that may be offered.

This guide has been developed to assist group leaders in organising a group viewing of the DVD, including some group discussion to promote a greater understanding of this difficult and sensitive issue.

<http://www.hse.ie/go/elderabuse>

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For further information please contact

HSE Information Line: 1850 24 1850

Website: www.hse.ie

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