

Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services

Most New Zealanders value older people, recognising their contributions as family and community members, and in the work force.

However, it is estimated that between **17,000** and **25,000** older people in New Zealand are experiencing some sort of abuse and neglect each year, many at the hands of family members¹.

Age Concern is New Zealand's lead organisation providing services to abused older people, as well as education about elder abuse and neglect.

Our Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services aim to keep older New Zealanders free from abuse and neglect.

- **Two older New Zealanders are abused physically, psychologically or financially every hour.**

Older persons should be able to live in dignity and security and be free of exploitation and physical or mental abuse.

– Principle 17 of the United Nations *Principles for Older People*

Aroha me ngā manaakitanga kauaka hei whakakino hei whakarere noa.

Love and respect, not abuse and neglect.

Age Concern is making a national difference

A government review of Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services noted that Age Concern New Zealand have been a key catalyst in the development and expansion of elder abuse and neglect prevention services in New Zealand².

“No one knew what to do except Age Concern. You were the only ones that listened to what I was saying. I was crying out for help.”
– EANP Service client



2013-2014 at a glance

- Age Concern assessed **2,000** cases where older people were suspected of being abused or neglected – that's **eight** referrals every working day.
- In about **75%** of these cases, abuse or neglect were confirmed.

- There are **24** Age Concern Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services around New Zealand.
- Our Elder Abuse Awareness Week 2014 reached about **1.3 million** New Zealanders who heard our important messages about elder abuse.
- In 2013 – 2014 we provided education to **8,000** professionals and aged care workers, focusing on promoting respectful practices and ways to reduce the incidence of abuse and neglect.
- Client feedback confirms that **90%** of the older people receiving our services had significant improvements in their living situations, including increased safety.
- Our leadership role includes encouraging other services and organisations to rally against elder abuse and neglect.

¹ The UK study of Abuse and Neglect of Older People: Prevalence Survey Report, Department of Health, June 2007, found 2.6-4% of people over the age of 66 reported being abused in the previous 12 months.

² A Review of Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services in New Zealand, P4, Office for Senior Citizens, Ministry of Social Development, April 2004

Elder abuse – what’s the problem?

Elder abuse and neglect is an umbrella term referring to a range of harms that may take place in the home, in the community, in residential care facilities and in hospitals.

The personal losses associated with abuse can be devastating and include the loss of independence, homes, life savings, health, dignity and security.

National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, 2008

Elder abuse and neglect can come in many forms, including physical, financial and psychological. Sadly, many older people can be subjected to multiple forms of abuse.

Cases seen by Age Concern’s Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services over the past three years:



Not all abuse and neglect is obvious or visible, meaning that problems can go undetected, unreported and unaddressed for long periods. It has been estimated that only **16%** of all incidents come to the attention of service agencies, like Age Concern, which can assist older people to live safely³.

70% of alleged abusers are family members

45% of alleged abusers are children of the victim

2/3 of abused older people are women

³ Iceberg Theory of Elder Abuse, *The National Elder Abuse Incidence Study*, National Center of Elder Abuse, USA, 1998.

Meeting the needs of the older person is always our priority.

What we do

We work closely with older people and their families to resolve issues of abuse and ensure they do not re-occur. Meeting the needs of the older person is always our priority.

We respond to each referral, assessing the older person’s situation and, if abuse and neglect are identified, providing intervention and support. We work with a wide network of other agencies and services and may connect the older person with one of these, including health services, Police, banks, and legal services.

Age Concern’s national office provides coordination, support and professional development to our regional services and other local community organisations active in dealing with elder abuse. Our national office is also working in communities, educating people and organisations about the signs and effects of abuse and neglect.

Elder Abuse Awareness Week

We also help to bring national attention to the issue of elder abuse through our annual Elder Abuse Awareness Week campaign.

The campaign’s aim is to raise awareness and understanding of elder abuse and neglect as a serious issue in New Zealand and encourage the public to adopt a no tolerance approach to elder abuse.

In 2014 our media coverage reached about **1.3 million** New Zealanders with our important message – that older people should be always respected, never abused.

“I have recently had the pleasure of dealing with X from your Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services. She has been wonderful, extremely helpful and supportive and her advice and care was greatly appreciated. She recently helped us with a difficult situation with my mum and issues we have with her current rest home and the move we are about to do. I found X to be a wonderful caring person with great advice and I believe she is a true asset and great ambassador for Age Concern.”

– EANP Client