Note: These are examples of people’s experiences of elder abuse and neglect. In order to protect confidentiality, names and some details have been changed.

Examples

- **Roger** has multiple health issues. His family cannot provide adequate care to meet his needs but are keeping him at home because paying rest home fees would erode his assets, their inheritance.

- Derek’s 70-year-old mother **Eleni** has been giving him the odd bit of cash to help him out of a jam. Today she doesn’t have enough to spare. He pushes her, twists her arm and forcibly takes her handbag off her to get at her purse.

- Recently widowed **Shamalee** was befriended by her neighbour Sharon. Shamalee had been taken care of by others all her life. She didn’t know how to buy food, pay bills, maintain her home or operate the heaters. She hated being alone. Her friends warned her about Sharon, but she was lonely, grief stricken and vulnerable. Sharon took care of things for her – her shopping, her bills. After a while Shamalee agreed to let Sharon move in with her. Sharon convinced Shamalee to sign ownership of her house over to her. By the time Shamalee realised she was being taken advantage of, her ‘friend’ had defrauded her of nearly everything she owned.

- **Sene** lives with her Dad and takes great pride in being able to look after him. She answers the phone, monitors his calls, controls who he sees and where he goes. She says “But Dad you don’t need anyone else, you’ve got me. I’ll always look after you. I love you, you know that.”

- **David** had all his teeth removed when he was 21 – it’s what they did in those days. Now at 75 he finds himself unable to afford new dentures because his grandson empties out his account every week when he does his grandfather’s shopping for him. David now lives on soft food that he can eat without teeth.

- **Wei Wern** is left alone and unsupported by her family who have moved to a different part of the country. Her adult children brought her to New Zealand some years ago. She spent her days caring for her grandchildren while the rest of the family worked hard to prosper in their new land. But now that her grandchildren have grown, she is no longer needed.
- Tilly's 80-year-old husband Ian has dementia and Tilly cares for him at home. To ensure he doesn't wander off while she goes shopping, Tilly ties him to a chair and locks him in the bedroom. When she comes home and finds he has urinated in the chair, she is so incensed by the extra work she now has to do she beats him with her walking stick and threatens him. “You’re a grown man. You should know better by now.”

- Kathryn is worried about her friend Taruna whom she has known for 25 years. Due to declining health, Taruna moved in with her daughter and son-in-law about 2 years ago. Lately Taruna appears to be very depressed. When Kathryn asks her what is wrong she replies that her daughter is often too busy to make her lunch, or take her shopping for new clothes or personal items. Quite often the daughter and son-in-law go out for dinner not leaving Taruna anything to eat. Taruna is embarrassed and hurt that her daughter is treating her like this but doesn't want to make a fuss.

- While Emily was in hospital, her daughter Karen removed a silver tea service, some valuable books and an old carriage clock to her own home. When Emily got home she thought she had been burgled and called the Police. Investigating the burglary, the Police discover that Karen has removed the goods “for safe-keeping. These are heirlooms, they don’t just belong to Mum, they belong to the whole family.”

- Mary is 89 and very frail. She lives with her daughter Sue, who provides for all her care needs. Sue has a full-time job, and is a single parent with two primary school aged children. Juggling physical and emotional care of her mother, parenting two children and holding down a full time job is extremely stressful for Sue. One day it all gets too much for her, she snaps at her mother, hits her son, yells at her daughter then bursts into tears.

**Peggy's Story**

Peggy has lived in her current home with her husband Ross for about 20 years. She looks 70-odd, with sparkly eyes and a welcoming smile. Peggy is well known in the local community and gets on well with her neighbours. The house now looks like it could do with a paint job. Lawns are okay, could do with mowing but are not overly long. There has been a flower garden at some point but the roses now poke up through a bed of weeds. One of their windows is broken and has cardboard taped over it.

One evening, Peggy's neighbours hear lots of shouting and banging next door. Peggy's son Karl has moved back home recently. The neighbours don't think much of him, and are worried he is causing trouble for his parents. When they hear the noise, they assume the worst and call the Police. When Police knock on the door, they are warmly greeted by Peggy. When the Police explain the reason for their visit Peggy exclaims; “Oh. Oh dear. Oh Officers, you are so kind. This is a bit embarrassing. It's my husband. He's got a bit doddery, fell over the side table and started shouting at me because he forgot it was there and just needed to feel better about himself. It's okay. He's calmed down now he's had a drink of water. It's not his fault, he doesn't really mean it”. She invites the Police in to talk with him.
While Police are investigating the situation, the front door opens and a male voice shouts “You better have my tea ready like I said you old cow”.

Peggy is transformed. She cowers... “That’s my son Karl,” she says and rushes to the kitchen. Karl is about 6 feet tall, thickly built, in his mid 30s. He glares at the Police: “What’s happened? The old man slapped her around a bit again? Don’t worry, she’s used to it.” He has obviously been drinking.

This scenario is not uncommon for Police. The reality in this case is this:

Ross has dementia. He did fall over the table, he did yell at his wife, but he has not historically been an abusive partner. His behaviour is a not uncommon consequence of the type of dementia he has.

Karl, on the other hand, is alcoholic. He has sought treatment for alcohol abuse before but is now using alcohol heavily and has recently been sacked from his job.

He psychologically abuses his mother and is financially abusing both his parents by taking from their wallets and selling their property for money to buy booze.

It is at this point that the EANP Services are often called in - whether there have been offences identified or not.

The EANP Coordinator will talk with the couple, find out what supports they are getting to assist with dementia associated needs, and link them to services as needed - respite care, day care, carer support, information about dementia, etc.

The Coordinator will also discuss the situation regarding Karl. The kind of options that may be considered include seeking a protection order, seeking support from other family members to help Ross and Peggy avoid keeping large amounts of cash in the house, placing any remaining items of value at an alternative location, or having Karl evicted. Parents considering such actions often need on-going support to go through with their decisions.

Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services focus on the rights and needs of the older person, working with them to develop strategies they can - and want - to follow to make their lives safer, and to keep them that way. In this situation the Coordinator may also discuss options that could give Peggy a break in her demanding role as carer for her husband.