

# Staying safe from abuse



# Who we are

**Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 so that they can love later life.**

**Our vision** is for Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow older.

**Our mission** is to inspire, involve and empower older people in Scotland, and influence others, so that people can make the most of later life.

**Our three strategic aims** are to:



**Help older people to be as well as they can be**



**Promote a positive view of ageing and later life**



**Tackle loneliness and isolation**

# How we can help

**We know that growing older doesn't come with a manual. Later life can bring changes and opportunities to your life and you may need to know about rights, organisations and services which are unfamiliar to you.**

That's why we provide free information and advice to help you on a range of topics including benefits and entitlements, social care, legal issues such as Power of Attorney, housing and much more. All of our guides are available to download for free from our website, or you can contact our helpline team to have copies posted to you for free.

The Age Scotland **helpline** is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families in Scotland looking for information and advice.

Later life can bring times when you just need someone to talk to. Our **friendship line** is part of our wider helpline and older people can call us for a chat. We're here to listen, provide friendship and offer support.

## For information, advice and friendship



**Call us free on: 0800 12 44 222**  
**(Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm)**



**Visit [agescotland.org.uk](https://www.agescotland.org.uk)**  
**to find out more.**



This information guide has been prepared by Age Scotland and contains general advice only, it should not be relied on as a basis for any decision or action and cannot be used as a substitute for professional or medical advice.

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Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, websites, companies, products, services or publications in this information guide does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by Age Scotland or any of its subsidiary companies or charities.

## Keeping yourself safe from abuse, harm and neglect

# What is Abuse?

Some older people in Scotland experience abuse, harm and neglect. They are abused by people they thought they could trust in places where they should be safe.

Anyone can be at risk, but older people can be particularly vulnerable if they need to depend on others, are frail, have health problems or have difficulty with thinking or memory.

Abusers often pick on people who feel isolated or are not connected to their community or other people. Some abusers try to make their victim feel more isolated to increase the victim's dependence on them and the control they have.

This booklet provides information on different types of abuse, why it can be difficult for someone to ask for help and what you can do if you are being abused.

We use the word **abuse** in this guide to mean abuse, harm and neglect. The **World Health Organisation** defines abuse of older people as:

“a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship in which there is expectation of trust that causes harm or distress to an older person.”

Abuse can take many forms and might include:

**Physical abuse** - physical force, hitting, pushing, rough handling, force-feeding, improper administration of medication, misuse of restraint.

**Sexual abuse** - forcing someone to take part in any sexual activity without their consent, including intentional touching, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment and use of sexual language.

**Financial abuse** - stealing money or possessions, having control over someone’s money, fraud or forgery. Financial abuse can also involve putting pressure on people to make financial decisions they would not otherwise make about things like Wills, financial affairs, property or Power of Attorney.

**Emotional, psychological or mental abuse** - bullying, threatening, persistently ignoring, intimidating, humiliating. It can also include depriving someone of their right to make everyday decisions, and choice about who they spend time with.

**Neglecting an older person**, or denying their basic needs such as help with going to the toilet, eating, getting dressed, medical and social needs.

**Discriminatory abuse** - such as unfavourable treatment because of a person’s age, ethnicity or sexuality.

**Institutional abuse** - poor processes or treatment in institutions such as care homes or hospitals.

# Staying safe

The Age Scotland helpline, **0800 12 44 222** can give advice about how to stay safe and in control including:

**Power of Attorney** – you can appoint someone you trust to take responsibility for your finances, property, care and welfare if in future you lose the mental capacity to make those decisions for yourself. For money matters, you can choose for your attorney to help you straight away. See Age Scotland's **Guide to Power of Attorney in Scotland** for more information.

**Look after your money** – Age Scotland's **Money Matters** guide provides ideas for keeping your budgeting and spending on track. If you know what should be happening with your income, bills, bank statements and spending you can quickly spot if money goes missing. If you need to trust other people with your money, keep an eye on what they spend and never let them have your PIN number. Get advice if you are being bullied or persuaded into financial decisions which don't feel right.

**Relationships** - if your partner's behaviour towards you changes because of a disability, health condition or addiction they have, it is not acceptable for you to be abused even if you feel the abuse is not their fault.

Relationships can be your best support. Stay in contact with friends and family who you trust face-to-face, by phone, by letter or online.

**Look after your home** - if you need work done to your house, a local Care and Repair service or Trusted Trader scheme can help you to find a reliable trader. Call the Age Scotland helpline to find out what is available in your area.

**Care and support at home** - if you need help to live at home ask your local council for a care needs assessment. Call our helpline for advice or see our guides **Care and support at home: assessment and funding** and **Care and support at home: practical help**.

**Be alert to scams** – be aware of phone and internet scams which will try to trick you into handing over your bank details. Remember, you do not have to let anyone into your home unless it is a genuine emergency. Do not let anyone in unless you can confirm their identity and you have made an appointment for them to visit.

Our **Scams** guide provides information about spotting scams and keeping your money safe.

**Community connections** – stay safe by being in touch with different people you can trust, so if something changes in your life which doesn't seem right you can quickly tell them.

# Why it can be hard to ask for help

Talking about abuse and asking for help is difficult, but it can be even harder if you are being abused by someone you are close to.

You may be embarrassed or ashamed of the situation your abuser has put you in. They may have convinced you that their abuse is your own fault, that you have imagined it or that you are overreacting. They may say that you would not cope without them.

You may be concerned that the abuser will get into trouble, that the abuse will get worse if you try to stop it or that other people will blame you for the abuse and treat you differently.

You may also find it hard to find the words to describe what is happening to you or be worried that you will get upset when you try to speak to someone. It is normal to be upset if you are being abused.

You could call a helpline such as Age Scotland or Hourglass to talk to someone. You do not have to give your name if you don't want to, and we will listen to you and help you to work out what you want to do.

# What you can do if you are being abused

**Understand what is happening to you** - abuse can happen to anyone, and can undermine your confidence and self esteem. If you are being abused you need to know that:

- it is not your fault
- you do not deserve to be abused
- you have a right to live without fear
- you have the right to safe, healthy relationships
- you have the right to have control over your own life
- you cannot change or control the abuser's behaviour
- abuse often gets worse over time
- there are people who can help you.

If you want to take action about the abuse, choose actions which you are comfortable with and which are safe for you. If you are not ready to take action now, knowing about your options may help you in future.

**Talk to someone you can trust** – this could help you to work out what you want to do, and the person you talk to may be able to help or to report the abuse for you. Keep up with routine health and dental appointments where you could speak to someone privately. If you have made someone your Power of Attorney, talk to them, but get advice if your attorney is abusing you.

**If it is safe for you, talk to the person who is abusing you** or ask someone to talk to them on your behalf. Tell them that the way they are treating you is not acceptable and that you want it to stop. Sometimes people close to you do not realise how their actions are affecting you unless you tell them.

**If you are being abused by a professional** such as a social worker, health professional or carer you could report them to their manager, report them to the police or to the organisation that regulates their profession. Call the Age Scotland helpline on **0800 12 44 222** for advice about who to contact.

**Contact emergency services** - if you are experiencing abuse which is serious, violent, or frightening call **999**. If you want to speak to the police but it is not an emergency call 101 or visit your local police station. Emergency services may also contact the local social work department which might decide to investigate.

**Contact your local social work department** - if you are classed as an 'adult at risk of harm' your council's social work department has responsibilities and powers to support and protect you. If you are not sure if the definition applies to you, contact them anyway as there may be other ways they could help you.

You are an ‘adult at risk of harm’ if you:

- are unable to look after your own wellbeing, property, rights or other interests, and
- are at risk of harm because of your own actions or someone else’s actions, and also
- have a disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, which means you are more vulnerable to being harmed than other adults.

Once the council knows that you might be at risk, they should investigate what is going on. This could include:

- interviewing the person who is abusing you
- looking at your health records
- taking steps to consult you about what you want
- making sure you are safe
- arranging support and involving the police if they believe a crime has been committed.

You don’t have to speak to them if you don’t want to.

# Who can help

## **Age Scotland helpline: 0800 12 44 222**

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers.

If you need an interpreter call **0800 12 44 222** and simply state the language you need e.g. Polish or Urdu. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Age Scotland helpline will do the rest.

You can call us for a copy of our publications list or download / order copies from our website at **[www.agescotland.org.uk](http://www.agescotland.org.uk)**.

## **Hourglass helpline: 0808 808 8141**

Hourglass is a charity that focuses on the issue of abuse of older people. If you phone this number it will not appear on your telephone bill.

**<https://wearehourglass.scot/scotland>**

## **Citizens Advice Bureau**

You can call Scotland's Citizens Advice Helpline for advice, or for details of your local bureau or see their website.

**0800 028 1456**

**[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/about-us/get-advice-s/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/about-us/get-advice-s/)**

# How you can help

## Our vision is a Scotland where everyone can love later life.

All the information and advice we provide is free and completely impartial and in helping people access their rights and entitlements, it can be life changing.

We are an ageing population and more people than ever are coming to us for support. You can help us be there for those that need us most.



### Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

- ▶ Call **03330 15 14 60**
- ▶ Visit **age.scot/donate**
- ▶ Text **LATERLIFE** to **70085** to donate £5.\*



### Fundraise

Whether it is having a bake sale, running a marathon or knitting small hats for the Big Knit, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/fundraise**.



### Leave us a gift in your Will

By choosing to leave us a gift in your Will, you can help Age Scotland to continue being there for vulnerable older people in the years to come. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/legacy**.

\* Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message

# Let's keep in touch



## Sign up to our newsletter

Our regular newsletters by email contain details of our campaigns, services and how you can support our work.

Sign up today by visiting [age.scot/roundup](https://age.scot/roundup)



## Follow us on social media

Our social media channels are a great way to keep up to date with our work and issues that affect older people.



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**Contact us:**

**Head office**

0333 323 2400

**Age Scotland helpline**

0800 12 44 222

**Email**

info@agescotland.org.uk

**Visit our website**

www.agescotland.org.uk

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