



# Older people and domestic abuse

## 1 Introduction

Domestic abuse is a complex, wide reaching and largely hidden phenomenon. Domestic abuse approaches historically had an emphasis on partner violence. More recently there has been recognition of family and intergenerational abuse, particularly the ways in which it may differ. All adults have the right to live in safety. Often services and campaigns focus on younger victims.

## 2 Why it matters

On average, older victims experience abuse for twice as long before seeking help as those aged under 60 and nearly half have a disability. Yet older clients are hugely underrepresented among domestic abuse services.

## 3 Information

As with other age ranges, domestic abuse amongst older people can be perpetrated by partners or family members. Abuse takes all forms, but younger adults are often the main perpetrators of financial abuse. Research suggests victims are more likely to have dementia which is considered a substantial risk factor. Services are not always targeted at older victims and do not always meet their needs.

## 4 Barriers to disclosure

Many of the problems facing older victims are common to all of those who experience domestic abuse, however experience is often exacerbated by social, cultural and physical factors that require a tailored response.

### Think about the following:

- Health and mobility issues can affect the victim's ability to access services.
- Use of technology in accessing services – this could be a barrier for some victims.
- Does the victim have limited eligibility for housing, legal or financial support?
- The victim can be reluctant to leave due to the history of their relationship/cultural background or has complex needs which make it difficult to do so.
- The perpetrator is an older person and/or has health issues of their own – domestic abuse can be wrongly minimised or missed. The victim may also be a carer for the perpetrator.
- The perpetrator may be a family member e.g. the victim's adult child or grandchild – making it more difficult for the victim to break away.

## 5 How can we help?

Put services where people can access them.

Ensure advertising of services is accessible and relatable to older victims.

Consider older victims in all service design.

Ensure professionals have training in domestic abuse including how to help older victims to identify their situation as abuse.

Practitioners know how to access services for both perpetrator and victim, including if the abuser is the victim's adult child or grandchild.

Ensure enough time is available to work with this client group as this may take longer.



**Avoid making assumptions about the person's needs**



## 6 How to respond to a disclosure

- ▶ Make sure that immediate harm is managed.
- ▶ Consider an adult safeguarding referral if you think the victim may also have care and support needs.
- ▶ Ensure you give the required amount of time to listen to the victim.
- ▶ Avoid making assumptions about the person's needs; use professional curiosity to find out more about their situation.
- ▶ Follow the SAVED Model principles.

## 7 Further information

For further information on support and guidance available visit:

[www.sefton.gov.uk/domestic-abuse](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/domestic-abuse)

[www.seftonsab.org.uk](http://www.seftonsab.org.uk)