

NSW interagency protocol for responding to abuse of older people

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Background to the Abuse of Older People Interagency Protocol

- May 1993 – Ministerial Advisory Committee on Abuse of Older People appointed
- The Advisory Committee lead the development of:
 - A number of research and discussion papers
 - A legal issues manual (September 1995)
 - The Abuse of Older People Interagency Protocol (October 1995)
- 1999 – Ageing & Disability Department developed *Dealing with Abuse of Clients and their Carers Training Kit*



2006 review of protocol

- Office for Ageing convened a working group comprising:
 - DADHC, NSW Health, NSW Police, Cabinet Office, Guardianship Tribunal, Attorney Generals and DoCS
- Aim
 - to identify best practice from research and resources for responding to elder abuse
 - Review effectiveness of current Protocol and Legal Issues Manual
 - Make recommendations on new policies and procedures
 - Consult with stakeholders
- Consultants – Elder Law University of Western Sydney
 - Research, consultations and enhancement of resources



The process

- **Focus Groups:** Broken Hill, Glebe, Lismore and Wollongong Aboriginal Workers, NSW Police, Aged Care Assessment Teams, Home Care & Meals on Wheels (Total of 55 Focus Group Participants). Findings highlighted the importance of local networks and for the protocol to be accessible to frontline workers including volunteers.
- **Survey conducted by mail/email with the same groups** (85 survey returns received) Findings confirmed variable knowledge and take up of the protocol. Also confirmed value of new protocol and need for clarity about steps and roles.
- **International literature and practice review:** Including developments over the last decade in service delivery and practice, legislation and approaches to victim's rights, current NSW Government legislation, policy and guidelines, particularly those related to violence against adults.
- **Consultation and workshops on draft Protocol**



Main findings from international literature

- **No Secrets: Guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse (UK)**
 - Emphasis on interagency focus
 - Identifying local responsibility
- **Protecting our Future: Report of the Working Group on Elder Abuse (UK)**
 - Development of a standardised approach
 - Framework to ensure consistency and quality
 - Acknowledgment of different tiers of response
 - Emphasises the need for support, awareness and education for carers
- **In Safe Hands: Implementing Adult Protection Procedures in Wales**
 - Acknowledgment of complexity of abuse of older people
 - Acknowledgment of criminal nature of abuse of older people



NSW policies – violence response and prevention

- Aligned draft document with existing NSW Government policies and guidelines such as:
 - Policy and Procedures for Identifying and Responding to Domestic Violence (NSW Health)
 - Guidelines for Responding to Adult Victims of Sexual Assault (NSW Health, NSW Police and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions)
 - Domestic Violence Interagency Guidelines (Department of Community Services)



Consultation process

- Consultation with NSW Government Departments and Agencies
- Consultation with the NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing
- Consultation and workshops with stakeholders in the non-government sector including:
 - Council of Social Services NSW
 - Alzheimer’s Australia NSW
 - Aged & Community Services Association
 - Australian Association of Gerontology
 - Council on the Ageing (NSW)
 - The Benevolent Society
 - Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW
 - The Aged Care Rights Services
 - Carers NSW
 - Alliance of NSW Divisions Ltd (GPs)



Outcomes of consultations

- Positive feedback – minor amendments to draft.
- Supported by NSW Government Departments and non-government organisations.
- Accessible to workers and volunteers, clear and succinct, easy to understand flowchart.
- Useful feedback to assist in distribution.
- NGOs keen to integrate material into own policies and procedures.



endorsement

- Final draft formally endorsed by Human Services Chief Executive officers' Group in December 2006
- Formally launched by the Minister for Ageing The Hon Kristina Keneally, August 2007



The Protocol

- **Audience:** Aimed at frontline workers and managers in NSW Government agencies and funded services that work with older people in community settings (ie. Non-residential aged care).
- **Role clarity:** More explicitly defines the role of key NSW Government agencies in responding to abuse of older people – particularly NSW Health and Police.
- **Does not significantly alter reporting and referral arrangements:** Streamlined response framework outlining expectations of workers.
- **Agency specific protocols:** The revised Protocol also encourages development or updating of agency specific policies and procedures.
- **Information:** Provides a range of practical and legal information to assist the response to an incident of abuse of older people.



Key principles

- Abuse should not be ignored
- Abuse can be complex and requires a multi layered response
- Need to coordinate our response to abuse of older people
- The interests of the abused older person are a priority
- Many forms of abuse are crimes and should be responded to accordingly
- Service providers across all sectors need to be aware of how to identify and respond to abuse of older people



Structure of the protocol

- **Section 1 – Introduction & Background**
 - **Section 2 – Defining Abuse of Older People**
 - **Section 3 – Principles for Responding to Abuse of Older People**
 - **Section 4 – Key Concepts in Responding to Abuse of Older People**
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- **Section 5 – Responding to Abuse of Older People**
- **Section 6 – Useful Contacts**

Practical
Response



Training

- Time limited working group established to implement plan and training strategy (DADHC, Police, Attorney General's, NSW Health, Office of Fair Trading, NSW Council of Social Services, Department of Community Services, Public Trustee, Guardianship Tribunal, Department of Housing)
- Training resources piloted with Home Care Service and Meals-on-Wheels once developed
- NSW Health and Police developed new internal procedures based on the Protocol – approved by Police Commissioner in late 2008
- Implementation process included a tiered approach to training of 16 sessions across the NSW (train the trainer with approx 500 attendees in total)



Challenges

- The intent of the Protocol to incorporate into individual agencies policies and procedures – no method of ensuring this occurs
- Training of approx. 500 people across 16 workshops and around 70 people undertaking train the trainer component. Resource package comprises participants manual, trainers manual, downloadable information on a CD and a DVD called Behind Closed Doors – how do we ensure the quality of information is accurate, informed and consistent across NSW? How do we ensure that there are people in each organisation trained in the protocol?
- The Protocol necessitates the development of networks to respond to identified abuse – are they operating? Who is involved? What is the level of cooperation in ensuring a positive outcome for abused person?



More challenges

External

- Assessing level of abuse in the community is difficult – little or no data / information available that can be used to indicate the effectiveness of the Protocol
- The commitment of each government agency is paramount to success for ongoing implementation ensuring agencies are supported to make notifications where required
- Need a system of collecting number of notifications, types of intervention and number of prosecutions in response to police reporting

Thank you

