

New Elder Abuse Services

New Elder Abuse Response Services (EARS) are now in place with a focus on intervention and ensuring seniors have practical, accessible help, advice and support available in their local communities.

A wider geographical spread of service providers will help more at-risk older New Zealanders than ever before. In addition to longstanding providers like Age Concern, 18 new organisations will be involved and 10 Age Concern branches are being funded for the first time.

At the cornerstone of the new service is a nationwide, free 24/7 helpline **0800 32 668 65 (EA NOT OK)**. Registered nurses will answer and provide callers with information or support about elder abuse – whether they're a victim themselves or someone concerned it might be happening to a friend or family member. Nurses will refer people to appropriate local elder abuse services to get help.

Education, prevention and awareness work will be run through the Office for Seniors, freeing up frontline providers to actively help older people facing different abuse situations.

With translation services available to the free 24/7 helpline, and providers selected to ensure services are culturally responsive, the new service will be able to respond to the social, economic, political and spiritual values of our different cultures and ethnic groups, including Maori, Pasifika, Indian, Chinese and Korean communities.

We've increased funding for these services and have negotiated new contracts with organisations that have been selected specifically based on their ability to deliver an effective intervention service for our vulnerable older people. For information see the **SuperSeniors website**.

In keeping with family and sexual violence approaches, the new EARS service will be fully integrated with other crown agencies such as Police, ACC and the Ministry of Health and focused on the highly successful and well understood 'It's not OK' programme.

Seniors deserve to be treated with respect, with dignity and with care, whatever their background or circumstances. These are difficult conversations to have but we need to raise awareness and speak out about this shameful problem, and not be afraid to reach out and ask for help and advice when it's needed.

Elder abuse is a scourge on our society and it's time for all of us to help raise awareness of this shameful abuse and make it clear – it's not OK.



In the two years I've had the privilege of being your Minister for Seniors I've travelled around the country talking to many groups of older New Zealanders and listening to your concerns. The message to me was clear that by far and away the most important and urgent challenge to address is elder abuse.

The serious and growing problem combined with an ageing population requires a different approach which is why we are changing the help and support services we provide.

Recent high profile examples of abuse in the media reinforce the need to change the way we intervene and to provide practical outcome focused services.

Ena Lai Dung had 15 broken bones and weighed just 29kgs when ambulance officers found her body. Her daughter was jailed for 13 years for manslaughter.

WWII veteran Ron Greenhalgh died last year without enough money to pay for his funeral because it was squandered at the TAB by his daughter Carolyn Alleyne. Branded "cold, callous, heartless and cruel" by her brother, Alleyne was sentenced to 10 months' home detention.

The new Elder Abuse Response Service (EARS) focuses on interventions to change the outcomes for seniors and service providers will actively help older people who are being abused and neglected physically, sexually, psychologically and financially.

The message is clear – elder abuse is not OK. If you see abuse, speak out against it.



Honourable Maggie Barry, ONZM,
Minister for Seniors

Raising awareness



Sir Peter Snell
PhD, KNZM, OBE



Dame Malvina Major
ONZ, GNZM, DBE



Dr Hon Sir Pita Sharples
KNZM, CBE



Peter Chin
CNZM



Dame Kate Harcourt
DNZM



Precious McKenzie
MBE

MSD's SuperSeniors Champions are adding their voices to help spread the word and encourage people to speak out and ask for advice and help about elder abuse. For resources go to the **SuperSeniors website**.

"Our elderly citizens have contributed a great deal. The least we can do is to try to ensure that they do not suffer from abusers who prey on their vulnerability"
Sir Peter Snell

SuperSenior Champions are a group of influential, articulate advocates for positive ageing. These honorary role models, led by Patron Sir Peter Snell, have made a series of videos which will be on the SuperSeniors Facebook page facebook.com/OfficeforSeniors

"Keep an eye out for the underdog – they need help and respect. Everyone needs love."
Dame Kate Harcourt

Reducing the risk of abuse

The new elder abuse response services are outcome focused and will help ensure older people experiencing abuse are protected and safe.

Risk factors for elder abuse include advanced age, material hardship, low levels of educational attainment, disability and social isolation.

Signs of elder abuse may include unexplained disturbed sleep, loss of interest in food, confusion and unexplained injuries. Elder abuse has devastating effects. Victims can experience social isolation, loss of independence resulting in earlier entry to residential care, and premature death.

Fifty nine percent of New Zealanders over 65 identify as disabled which puts them at greater risk of being abused.

Older people with disabilities face barriers to escaping violence as they may be forced to rely on their abuser who may be their main caregiver. They may also not be able to communicate what has occurred or don't know who to contact.

Elder Abuse - the facts:

- » up to 70,000 seniors will experience some form of elder abuse this year
- » 79 percent of reported abuse is at the hands of a family member
- » 46 percent of abusers are partners, or adult sons or daughters
- » 43 percent of abusers live with the person they are abusing
- » women are more likely than men to experience abuse
- » older men are more likely to experience abuse than younger men.

We can all help. If you see abuse or are being abused, speak out - ask for help.