

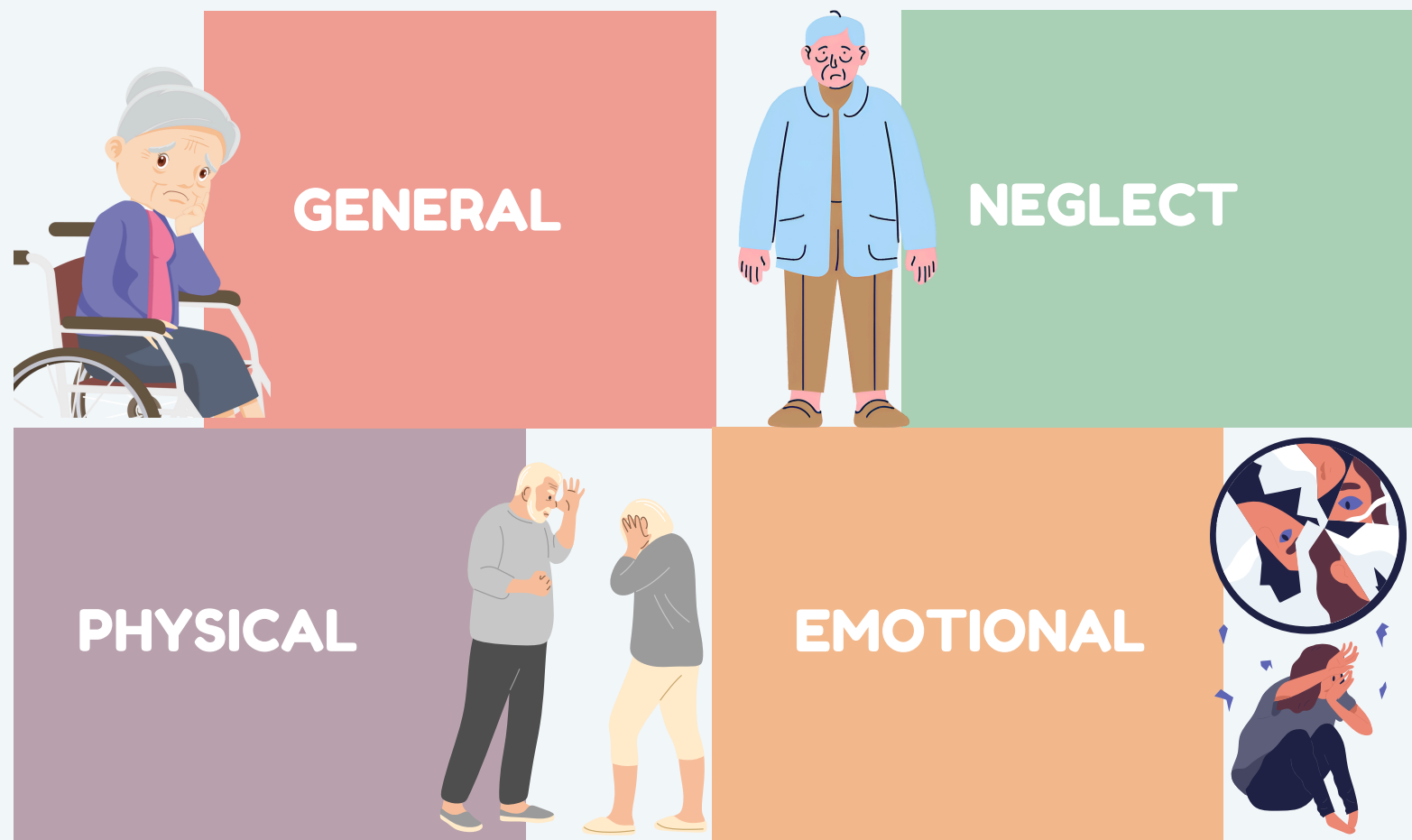


**Health
Information
and Quality
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Indicators of Abuse

in designated centres for older people
and people with disabilities



Overview

Recognising signs of abuse is crucial for timely intervention and support. It is important to enable practitioners and the public to identify where people at risk are being abused. The Chief Inspector within the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) undertook a review of academic and other literature to identify indicators of abuse. These have been collated and grouped into eight types of abuse, which are presented in this document and also on a poster summarising the indicators or types of abuse for display in health and social care services.

Abuse is not always isolated to a single type. Individuals may experience multiple forms of abuse simultaneously, compounding the harm and making the detection and intervention of the abuse more challenging. Understanding the possible overlapping nature of abuse is vital for a holistic approach to prevention and support.

The below indicators should not be looked at in isolation, as more than one type of abuse can happen at the same time. This is not a comprehensive or definitive list of indicators, it is designed to prompt investigation.

Indicators common to most types of abuse

- An individual's report or reports of abuse
- Ambivalence or deference about a certain person, reluctance to be alone with them and or subdued in their presence
- Change in appetite or unusual weight gain or loss
- Signs of distress, such as: anxiety, confusion, withdrawal, aggression, change in behaviour
- Poor concentration, sleep disturbance, insomnia, tendency to spend long periods in bed.



Indicators of physical abuse

1. Unexplained or frequent (or inconsistency with account of what happened/ inconsistent with lifestyle) bruises, marks, burns, fractures, lacerations, abrasions, welts, loss of hair in clumps, other minor injuries or falls. These may be found at different stages of healing or such that it is difficult to suggest an accidental cause
2. Injury shape similar to an object
3. Untreated medical problems, failure to seek medical treatment or frequent changes of GP
4. Ulcers, bed sores, left in wet clothing
5. Being shabby, or unkempt, dirty or unsafe living conditions
6. Appearing to be over medicated or laboratory findings of either an overdose or under dose of medications
7. Accumulation of medicine which has been prescribed for the client but not administered
8. Caregiver's refusal to allow visitors to see a vulnerable adult alone.



Indicators of psychological/ emotional abuse

1. Overtly affectionate behaviour to alleged perpetrator
2. Unexplained paranoia or excessive fears
3. Low self-esteem
4. Apparent false claims, by someone involved with the person, to attract unnecessary treatment.



Indicators of sexual abuse

1. Torn, stained, bloody underclothes
2. Difficulty in walking or sitting
3. Pain or itching, bruising or bleeding in the rectal, genital area, thighs, buttocks, breasts, upper arms and or neck
4. Foreign bodies in genital or rectal openings
5. Sexually transmitted urinary tract and or vaginal infections, unexplained genital discharge, or sexually transmitted diseases
6. Pregnancy in a woman who is unable to consent to sexual intercourse
7. Overt sexual behaviour and or language which is out of character
8. Fear of receiving help with personal care and or medical examination.



Indicators of financial or material abuse

1. Inexplicable shortage of money or inability to maintain lifestyle, pay household bills and so on
2. Unexplained or sudden withdrawal of money from accounts, unauthorised use of ATM cards
3. Suspicious addition of names to financial accounts
4. Unexpected changes to will, deeds or power of attorney
5. Personal items or funds going missing
6. Unreasonable and or inappropriate gifts
7. The person who manages the financial affairs is evasive or uncooperative
8. Resident's personal funds being used to cover staff expenses



9. Disparity between the person's living conditions and their financial resources
10. Unexplained sudden transfer of assets to a family member or someone outside the family
11. Sudden appearance of previously uninvolved people, or unusual and extraordinary interest and involvement in assets of the person
12. Concern only expressed about financial affairs or assets and not about physical or emotional care of the person
13. High levels of expenditure without evidence of the person benefiting
14. Items purchased for which the person does not require or use
15. Failure to provide receipts for financial transactions carried out on behalf of the person
16. The person who manages the financial affairs is evasive or uncooperative
17. Forging of signatures relating to finances or assets.

Indicators of neglect or acts of omission

1. Poor, hazardous or unsanitary environment, living conditions – dirty or unhygienic, inadequate heating and or lighting
2. Poor physical condition and or personal hygiene, ulcers, pressure sores, clothes unclean, wet or inappropriate or inadequate
3. Untreated injuries or medical problems, failure to give prescribed medication
4. Failure to ensure appropriate privacy and dignity
5. Social isolation
6. Denying access to medical and social care, social interactions
7. Sensory deprivation, not allowed to have access to glasses, hearing aids and so on.



Indicators of discriminatory abuse

1. Verbal or physical abuse in public places or residential settings
2. Care and support does not take account of the person's individual needs in terms of a protected characteristic
3. Hate mail
4. Damage to personal property
5. Being refused access to services or being excluded based on a protected characteristic.



Indicators of organisational or institutional abuse

1. Limiting personal freedoms and choices or forced scheduling of activities
2. Limiting social interactions, visitors, and or recreational and educational activities
3. Lack of personal clothing and possessions or communal use of personal items
4. Inadequate staffing levels, training of staff or management overview and support
5. Absence of individual care plans
6. Poor standards of care, personal hygiene
7. Poor or inadequate diet, limiting access to food and hydration
8. Controlling personal finances
9. Not respecting privacy with personal matters and bodily integrity.



References

✓ 1

Safeguarding: recognising, reporting and recording adult abuse, Butler 2022(based on UK legislation and policy)

Link: <https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=95c9692c-4c59-4bc9-ab97-5fc5cabd3d38%40redis>

✓ 2

Safeguarding Ireland

Link: <https://www.safeguardingireland.org/safeguarding/>

✓ 3

Social Care Institute for Excellence, United Kingdom

Link: <https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/atagance/atagance69-adult-safeguarding-types-and-indicators-of-abuse.pdf?res=true>

✓ 4

Southern Health and Social Care Trust, Northern Ireland

Link: <https://southerntrust.hscni.net/involving-you/community-development-and-user-involvement/community-sector-training/adult-safeguarding-information-and-resources/adult-safeguarding/signs-and-indicators-of-adult-abuse/>

✓ 5

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, the United States of America

Link: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/home-and-community-services/types-and-signs-abuse>

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