

Seminar activity 1: Exploring case examples of elder financial abuse

This seminar instruction information has been written to support you in using the elder financial abuse educational materials as part of small group training. It will provide you with some ideas as to how you might like to use the materials, and makes suggestions of how to facilitate group discussions about decision making in cases of elder financial abuse.

Introduction

As part of the educational materials section of the website you will find a series of case examples of elder financial abuse. These have been developed based on real cases of abuse reported by professionals from the social care, health and banking sectors. Each case features a specific professional, for instance a social worker, dealing with a different type of suspected financial abuse. The cases are labelled so that you can choose by the nature of financial abuse that occurred, for instance activities of rogue traders or a case involving misuse of lasting power of attorney authority. You can also select your case by the type of professional who was involved in the case example. There are cases reported by a range of job roles across the different sectors.

When preparing for the training it may be a good idea to remind yourself of the content of any key policies or procedures your organisation and professional body has that may affect how cases of elder financial abuse should be dealt with. You can then take a copy with you to the training for people to look at, and it also means that you can refer to any policies specific to your sector or location if questions arise.

Preliminary activities:

1. To begin the training it may be useful to revisit some basic concepts with your group, such as what people understand as financial abuse, and why it is an important that such abuse is identified quickly and appropriate action taken. You can find a definition of elder financial abuse on the website home page, but it may be valuable to ask the group to give their own ideas of what elder financial abuse is, and to write down the key points of what they say on a white board or large piece of paper. This is a useful exercise to highlight the range of situations that could be seen to constitute financial abuse. It may also emerge that your group members have different ideas about what is, and what is not, financial abuse. These differences emphasise why it can sometimes be particularly difficult to make decisions about elder financial abuse.
2. Next, choose one of the case examples included under the educational materials. A number of the case examples have associated podcasts, where an experienced professional discusses the same case and gives their perspective on the issues raised and how they might have dealt with things differently. Case examples with associated podcasts are clearly labelled.

3. Each scenario has questions embedded at different stages. Divide your group into teams of two or three people so that they can discuss the questions raised at the different points throughout the case. Each case begins with background information about the older person, and basic information about what has happened. The case is then divided up into sections covering what happened as the situation progressed and the actions taken at different stages. In order not to pre-empt what actions were taken at each stage you could withhold sections until the group has discussed the previous section or remind people not to read ahead at each point.

Using the case examples:

1. Begin by giving the group ten minutes to read the first section of the example, which is the background to the case, and to answer the associated questions. At any stage you can bring the smaller groups together to have a larger group discussion to address any differences in answers. When you have a larger group discussion make a note of any issues raised that you think are key, so that you can return to these notes at the end of the session to bring things together.
 - The questions at the end of the background section should encourage people to give their initial thoughts about the case, and to use their instinct as to whether the individual is actually being abused. Identifying elder financial abuse is not always clear-cut; so sometimes what is seemingly innocent in one situation may be perceived as possible abuse in another. The aim is to highlight why suspicions might be raised, but also why it might be difficult to be sure what is going on.
 - You should also get people to identify whether they think any action should be taken based on the background information, and if so, what that action should involve. If abuse is suspected, early action may help to safeguard the older person from further losses, so people should be aware what steps to take.
2. When you are happy that all the questions in relation to the background of the case have been addressed, tell your group to move on to considering the rest of the case in more detail. Alternatively, you may want to consider each section in turn, or ask people to read the whole case and discuss the questions together at the end.
 - As the case progresses, you may find that people query why it was not dealt with differently. Tell people that it is OK if they have different ideas about what should have been done. The aim is to learn from different experiences and also to understand why people might have different perceptions about the same case. Policies and procedures cannot cover every eventuality and some cases are less clear-cut than others so there are sometimes variations in outcomes.

3. When the groups have finished reading and discussing the case in small groups, if you have chosen a case with an associated podcast, this may be a good time to play the podcast to the group.
4. When you are ready, bring the discussion about the case to a close. Draw together the main issues raised and the overall lessons that can be learned.

Other discussion points:

- It may be interesting to get people to think about the ways in which professionals from other sectors may approach the same case they have just read. The group members should be able to identify the benefits of working well with other agencies, but also why challenges may present themselves and how these might be overcome
- Do you or any of the group members have experience of similar situations, which might be useful to discuss alongside the case example?

Other ways to use the case examples:

Although the case examples have been written to represent the perspective of the professional who encountered the situation (for instance a GP) it may also be of value to look at examples encountered by professionals working in other sectors. For instance, if you were training a group of novice social workers, by looking at a case of suspected abuse reported by a cashier working in a bank you can encourage the group to think about interdisciplinary working and at what point different sectors might need to work together.

Follow up points:

1. Make sure the group has your email contact details so that they can follow up with you if they have any queries after the training.
2. You may also want to recommend 'Further reading', for example if your organisation or professional body has relevant policies or procedures.
3. Tell people if they would like to develop their decision making capacity in cases of elder financial abuse that they can access the on line decision aids on the website.

Training session materials needed:

- Paper copies of the case example to be reviewed during the training. (You may even prefer to show the case example via a large screen).
- A marker pen / white-board pen
- A white board or a large piece of paper to write down key points