

Isolation during the pandemic could exacerbate risk factors for elder abuse

- **Monday 15 June is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**
- **Calls to Advocare's Elder Abuse Helpline increased in April compared to the number of calls during the same period last year with calls increasing every year.**
- **Instances of elder abuse may be hidden due to the COVID-19 lockdown**

On Monday 15 June, Advocare is asking all West Australians to reflect on the growing community issue of elder abuse. People can show support by wearing a purple ribbon. And, major Perth city landmarks will be bathed in a purple light show during evenings next week to remind everyone of this significant issue.

"We are deeply concerned that some of the pre-existing risk factors for elder abuse may become amplified during the pandemic at the same time those noticing the signs of elder abuse are not there to see it. This calls for greater awareness by everyone of what elder abuse is, how to prevent it and how to respond to it," said Advocare's Chief Executive, Diedre Timms.

"We're asking all West Australians to reflect on the growing problem of elder abuse in our community and how they could help."

Ms Timms said: "Elder abuse can happen anywhere - in residential aged care, home care and in families. Advocare is here to listen and to help to resolve the situation."

Key points:

- Covid-19 pandemic may have profound negative impacts on older persons' enjoyment of their social, economic and health rights.
- Extreme social isolation may be experienced as an unintended consequence flowing from social distancing measures.
- Older persons may not as easily bounce back from financial loss including recouping money they have loaned to persons close to them to help them out in this crisis.
- They may face a disproportionate risk of serious and life-threatening complications from the virus and their health rights may be under greater threat when living in higher-risk environments such as aged care facilities.

Not every older person will be impacted by the pandemic in this way. The virus affects everyone in both common and unique ways. For older persons who have increased vulnerabilities including financial disadvantage, living remotely, care support needs, digital exclusion; they may experience greater challenges in making it through this pandemic.

Specifically, during this pandemic, elder abuse may be recognised in these situations:

- Unnecessary levels of isolation that go beyond government restrictions
- Preventing access to potential supports and modes of communication (phone, internet)
- Unreasonable cancelling of care supports
- Misinformation causing further anxiety and fear
- Requests for sums of money to pay for unspecified items
- Threatening to leave the older person without social or care supports

- Pressure around how to make a will, power of attorney document or advanced care planning document
- Health treatment that discriminates solely based on age or disability

People experiencing elder abuse are not alone: Call the WA Elder Abuse Helpline **1300 724 679**

Visit Advocare's website: <https://www.advocare.org.au/seniors-and-families/elder-abuse-support/>

For more information or to arrange an interview with Advocare's Chief Executive Officer Diedre Timms contact:

Joanne Fowler on mobile 0408 878 817 or Gina Cumberland at Advocare on 6252 3514

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