

WORKING WITH OLDER PEOPLE

A service provider's guide to welfare checks and suspected abuse



VICTORIA POLICE

THERE ARE CONCERNS REGARDING THE WELLBEING OF AN OLDER PERSON

WELFARE

Ask your local police to conduct a 'welfare check' if:

- the older person has not been seen for some time and this is out of character
- services, family or neighbours have been unable to contact the older person; and/or
- known risk factors for the older person require contact be made with them.

The purpose of engaging police to do a welfare check is to locate a person and ensure they are alive and safe.

- Prior to requesting police undertake a welfare check, there is an expectation that you to have attempted to contact the older person, their family or carer.
- Police will prioritise attendance for a welfare check based on the information provided and urgency of other requests for police assistance.
- Police will generally attend the property and seek access to confirm the person is alive and well.

SUSPECTED ABUSE

If there are concerns that a family member, trusted friend, neighbour or designated carer are:

- engaging in violent behaviour towards the older person
- coercing the older person, including to provide access to finances
- harming the older person
- controlling the older person (physically or psychologically)
- placing the older person at risk; and/or
- denying services or access to the older person.

Contact your local police

- Ask to speak with the Family Violence Liaison Officer or the Section Sergeant.
- Be sure to have the information discussed on the next page on hand prior to calling.
- Timing of police response will depend on the information provided and urgency of other requests for assistance.
- Follow up your conversation with an email incorporating the key information and agreed actions.

If police believe the older person is at risk of harm due to the acts and/or omissions of another person, a response will be initiated using family violence processes.

All police responses to reports of family violence are investigated using a risk assessment framework. Police will apply an options model based on all the information received, to determine whether civil or criminal interventions and/or referrals are made as per requirements in the **Code of Practice for Investigation of Family Violence**. The Code of Practice is available from police.vic.gov.au

REMEMBER, IN AN EMERGENCY ALWAYS DIAL TRIPLE ZERO (000)

REQUESTING A WELFARE CHECK

Prior to contacting police for a welfare check please ensure you have the following information on hand:

- Address of the older person (including the type of premises such as house, apartment, unit etc).
- The older person's name, date of birth (DOB) and phone number.
- Circumstances the person was last seen.
- Attempts made to contact the person, family, carer or other service providers.
- Any known medical conditions.
- Any known disabilities.
- Current risks for the older person.
- Any pets or assistance animals.
- Availability of keys, or access to key safe.
- Agency contact point and contact details if further assistance or information required.

To request a welfare check call triple zero (000).

Requests for welfare checks will usually be assigned to police working out of the police station nearest to the address provided. If you do not receive a call from either the older person or police confirming a welfare check has been undertaken contact the local police station for follow up.

Contact details for your local police station are available from the Victoria Police website: [police.vic.gov.au](https://www.police.vic.gov.au)

WHAT IS ELDER ABUSE?

Elder abuse is a form of family violence involving any act (single or repeated) which causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust, such as family or friends. It includes physical, emotional, financial, sexual or social abuse and neglect.

Examples of elder abuse will often include a combination of a range of different types of abuse including physical or sexual abuse, threats to withhold access to grandchildren, taking money or possessions without permission, stopping an older person from participating in their usual forms of enjoyment.

Elder abuse can happen to any older person regardless of who they are or where they live.

RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED ABUSE

Prior to contacting police for a response please ensure you have the following information on hand:

- Personal details of the older person including name, DOB, address and phone number.
- Type of premises (house, apartment, unit, etc), and presence of any animals (pets or assistance animals).
- Have considered the circumstances that you believe require police involvement:
 - Known risk factors of the older person:
 - isolated
 - dependant on others for care/assistance
 - history of family violence
 - decline in health, including cognitive decline
 - identified need for services or an increase in services.
 - Known risk factors of the alleged perpetrator of family violence/abuse:
 - psychiatric or psychological issues
 - drug or alcohol dependence
 - dependent on the older person for housing or other needs
 - domineering or controlling personality traits
 - financial or relationship issues
 - carer stress.
 - Details of alleged incidents of suspected abuse or family violence (where known).
- Communication and behaviour:
 - What are the older person's typical behaviours and communication strategies?
 - Are they able to make decisions about aspects of their life?
 - Are they able to communicate (verbally or otherwise)?
 - Do they require an interpreter or communication aid?
 - Do they require a support person?
 - Do they communicate better in the morning or afternoon?

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