Providing 24/7 help and advice
on violence against women,
domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Live Fear Free

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This toolkit has been created to help you recognise when an older person may be experiencing abuse from a family member, and how to offer support in a safe and calm way.

Older people can experience all forms of abuse, yet it is often hidden, misunderstood and underreported.

Abuse can happen at any age.
And it can happen within families.

If you are worried about someone, don't wait. Contact Live Fear Free for confidential advice.

Campaign purpose

Raise awareness that abuse can happen at any age, including within families.

Abuse by a family member can be difficult to recognise or talk about. It may be mistaken for care or concern, while controlling or harmful behaviour can become part of everyday life. Older people may also depend on the person causing harm for care, money, transport or support, making it harder to speak out or reach out for help.

Abuse isn't always physical, and it's rarely just one thing. Financial abuse, intimidation, isolation, physical harm and the misuse or withholding of care can often overlap. This campaign seeks to challenge assumptions about abuse in later life.

We want to open up conversations that have long been silenced, challenge stereotypes, and empower those that might be experiencing abuse, survivors of abuse, and the people around them to act.



What we're trying to do

Raise awareness that abuse can happen within families, including adult children and other close relatives.

Help people recognise abuse can take many different forms - include financial control, intimidation, isolation, physical harm and neglect.

Encourage professionals, friends and family to recognise the subtle signs and start compassionate conversations.

Empower older people to feel seen, heard, and respected, reframing help-seeking as a sign of **strength, not weakness,** encouraging them to seek advice or explore their options at their own pace.

Build visibility of the Live Fear Free Helpline as a trusted source for advice and support.

Who is this campaign for?

Older people experiencing abuse

Those experiencing abuse from a family member may struggle to recognise or talk about what is happening to them. They may feel **isolated, ashamed or dependent on the person harming them.** They may have a complicated relationship with their abuser and feel what is happening is simply part of family life or wonder whether it is serious enough to ask for help. Often, they are worried talking about the abuse could result in serious repercussions for their abuser.

This campaign aims to **empower victims and survivors** to seek support by increasing awareness of Live Fear Free. As well as highlighting the help available to them so that they feel seen and heard and know it's **never too late to ask for help or advice.**



Who is this campaign for?

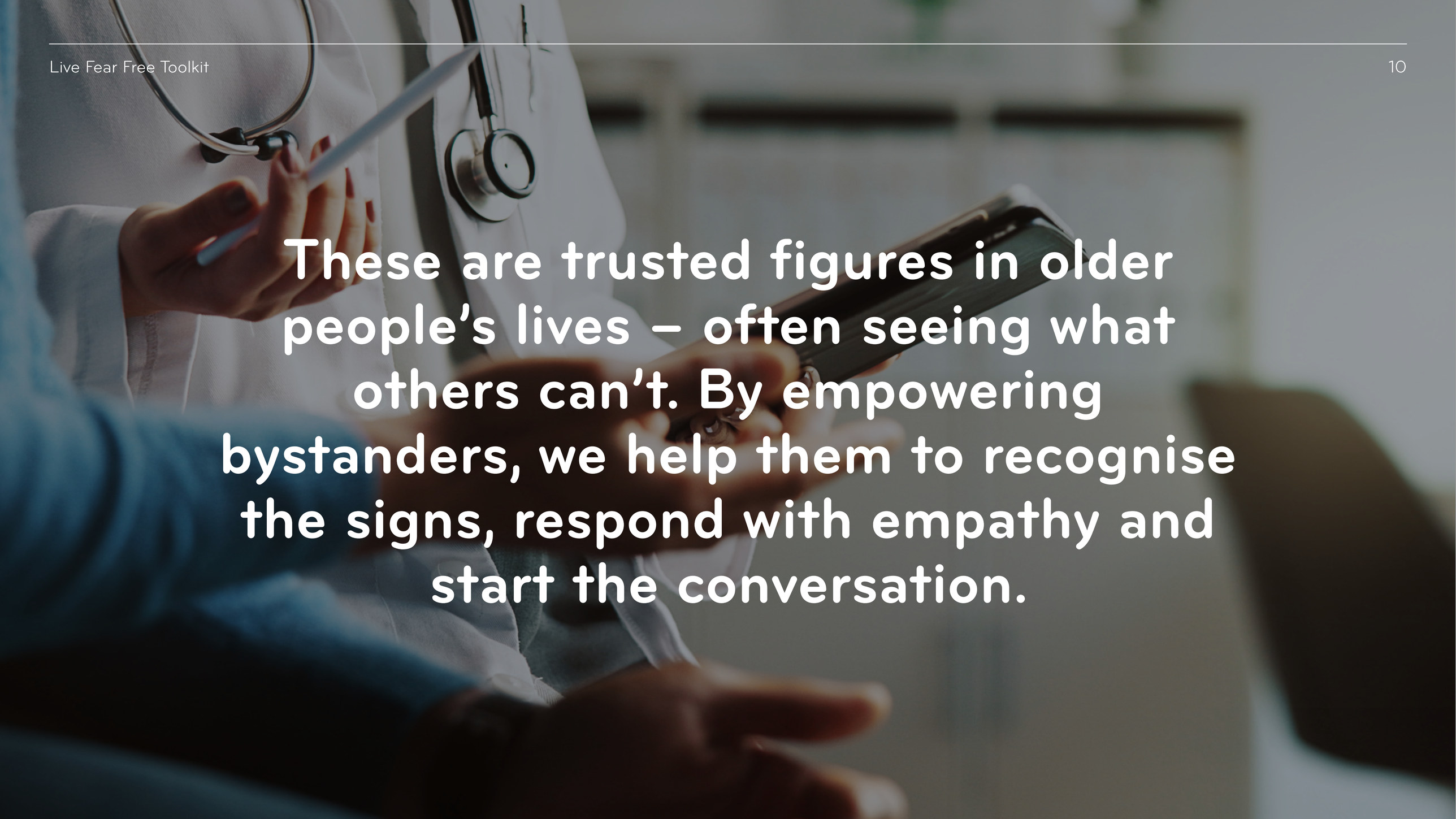


Bystanders and professionals

Abuse affecting older people can often remain hidden. Some older victims may not disclose their experiences unless a trusted professional asks about their wellbeing and safety in a supportive and sensitive way.

Family and friends may suspect something, but feel uncertain, conflicted, or fearful of overstepping the line, especially if they feel a member of the family is responsible for causing the harm.

That's why bystanders play an important role in this campaign - particularly professionals who see older people regularly during everyday life: GPs, Pharmacists, Hairdressers, Care workers, Community volunteers.



These are trusted figures in older people's lives – often seeing what others can't. By empowering bystanders, we help them to recognise the signs, respond with empathy and start the conversation.

Recognising possible signs of abuse

Abuse within families can take many forms and may be difficult to recognise, especially when the person causing the harm is also providing care or practical support.

You might notice an older person:

Sounds **nervous, tearful,** or **hesitant to speak.**

Doesn't have **access to a personal phone.**

Apologises frequently or seems **fearful** of being overheard.

Rarely attends appointments **alone** and often whoever attends with them **speaks on their behalf.**

Seems **less able to make their own decisions** or do things they previously managed independently.

Mentions someone else **controlling** what they do, where they go, who they see or their finances.

Appears **worried** about money, their home or a particular family member.

Refers to isolation ("I don't get out much anymore") or fear ("I can't say too much").

Is referred to by friends or neighbours as **withdrawn or "different lately".**

Selects clothing choices that don't fit the weather and seem **designed to hide injuries.**

Has **unexplained injuries,** or **changes in their appearance or living conditions** that cause concern.



Abuse in different forms

Abuse can take different forms, and more than one form of abuse may happen at the same time.

Financial and economic abuse

Controlling, taking or misusing someone's money or preventing them from accessing their finances

Possible signs:

- Control of pensions, benefits, bank cards or spending.
- Money going missing or unexplained debts.
- Pressure over wills, property or inheritance.
- Appearing unable to afford essentials, despite having an income or financial resources.

Coercive control, intimidation or isolation

A pattern of behaviour that limits someone's freedom, independence or relationships.

Possible signs:

- Restricting contact with friends and family.
- Monitoring phone calls or movements.
- Making decisions without agreement.
- Threats, criticism or humiliation.

Physical abuse

Hitting, pushing, restraining or otherwise physically harming someone.

Possible signs:

- Unexplained injuries.
- Explanations that appear inconsistent.
- Fear of a family member or reluctance to discuss an injury.
- Changes in behaviour or confidence following an incident.

Abuse through care, support or neglect

Using care or support as a means of control or withholding essential care.

Possible signs:

- Medication, food or personal care being withheld or controlled.
- Restricted access to transport, appointments or activities.
- Poor living conditions or lack of essentials despite reliance on a family member.

If something feels concerning or not quite right, trust your instincts, it's okay to ask a gentle, open question.

What can you do?

Notice.

Ask.

Listen.

Connect with support.

Live Fear Free (LFF)

Live Fear Free is a free, confidential, 24/7 helpline providing advice, information and support for:

Anyone experiencing domestic abuse or sexual violence.

Anyone concerned about a friend, family member, or neighbour.

Professionals seeking guidance.

Contact Live Fear Free:

Email: **info@livefearfreehelpline.wales**
Webchat via **gov.wales/livefearfree**
Call: **0808 80 10 800**
Text: **0786 007 7333**
BSL users can use the Convo app: **Type in 'Live Fear Free'**

It's open to all ages, genders, and backgrounds.

You can contact Live Fear Free if you are experiencing abuse, worried about someone else, or simply unsure what to do next. Abuse can happen at any age, including within families. It's never too late to ask for help.



Responding to concerns

Listen: and take concerns seriously.

Believe and validate: "you're not alone – this is not your fault." Or "you deserve to feel safe."

Prioritise autonomy: ask what they want to happen next. They may have complicated feelings about the person causing harm or may not be ready to make changes immediately.

Avoid increasing risk: do not confront the family member or take action that could put the person at greater risk.

Contact Live Fear Free: for specialist and confidential guidance.

Older people's experiences and how they seek help may be shaped by disability, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, cognitive health, financial circumstances and care needs. Family relationships can take different forms, including chosen family. Avoid assumptions about someone's relationships, identity or what support they may want.

The approach must always be person-centred and inclusive.

Important note for campaigns and partner teams:

While this toolkit aims to support awareness and response across Wales, your organisation may have its own safeguarding procedures and reporting protocols in place.

This guidance should complement – **not replace** – your existing safeguarding processes. And any immediate concerns should be managed through established channels.

Support the campaign

Extend reach and reinforce consistent messaging.

Share Live Fear Free-approved social content and visuals.

Display contact information in community spaces.

Use plain, everyday language and avoid jargon like "coercive control" without explaining what the behaviour can look like.

Encourage people to notice possible patterns, ask sensitive questions and listen without judgement.

To book an awareness raising session on Live Fear Free and find out what we can offer your organisation, please email:
info@livefearfreehelpline.wales

Follow us on:
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X: **@LiveFearFree**
Facebook: **Live Fear Free**