Purpose

This policy aims to protect residents in Hindmarsh retirement villages from the impacts of elder abuse. This policy acts to inform and guide key stakeholders of our villages on the internal processes in managing and responding to instances of elder abuse that occurs within our villages.

Policy Statement

Hindmarsh is an organisation that values courtesy and respect. Our staff are expected to always conduct themselves with professionalism and courtesy. We have a zero tolerance for violence, abusive or offensive language, racial abuse, sexual harassment and intimidating behaviour in our villages.

Definition

The World Health Organisation describes Elder abuse as:

'A single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person'

Some forms of elder abuse include:

Psychological/emotional abuse - Causing emotional pain or distress through actions such as verbal abuse, threats, or humiliation.

Financial Abuse - Illegally or improperly using an older person's funds, property, or assets.

Physical Abuse - Inflicting physical pain or injury through actions such as hitting, slapping, or restraining.

Sexual Abuse - Any non-consensual sexual contact or behaviour.

Neglect - Failing to provide necessary care, assistance, or services to an older person, resulting in harm or risk of harm.

Examples Specific to a Retirement Village:

- Pressuring a resident to change their Will or power of attorney.
- A staff member ignoring calls for help or delaying medication.
- Coercing residents to sign contracts under stress or confusion.
- Visitors or carers limiting access to phones, outings, or other residents.

Scope

This policy applies to all residents, employees, volunteers, contractors, and visitors with Hindmarsh retirement villages. It covers all forms of elder abuse as described in the definition.

Identifying Elder Abuse

Below are some common signs of elder abuse:

- Unexplained injuries or bruises.
- Sudden withdrawal or anxiety.
- Confusion about finances or unpaid bills.
- Overly controlling caregivers or relatives.
- Deterioration in hygiene or nutrition.
- Fearfulness or unusual submissiveness

Prevention

Hindmarsh currently take the following measures to reduce the risk of the occurrence of elder abuse within our organisation:

Pre-Employment Screening: Background checks and reference checks are conducted for all new hires to ensure they are suitable for working with older vulnerable adults.

Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) Card: All staff are required to hold a WWVP card before being permitted to work alone in a Hindmarsh retirement village. A register is maintained to ensure WWVP cards are renewed prior to the expiry date.

Observation: All staff are expected to remain observant, and report any behaviours, incidents, or signs of elder abuse to senior management.

Training All Staff: Staff are trained to identify signs and symptoms of elder abuse and report this to management as part of the induction and annual refresher training course.

Education: In addition to educating staff on identifying signs and symptoms of elder abuse, we also strive to educate our communities. Fellow residents also have an obligation to report to management (or other external authorities) any suspicions of elder abuse.

Reporting Elder Abuse

Reporting Mechanism: It is everyone's responsibility to report suspected cases of elder abuse. Staff, residents, family, friends, contractors and visiting healthcare providers are encouraged to escalate any observations or incidents of concern to management.

Confidentiality: Reports of abuse will be handled with the utmost confidentiality to protect the privacy of all parties involved.

Non-Retaliation: Individuals who report abuse in good faith will not face retaliation or discrimination.

Responding to reports of elder abuse

Hindmarsh take any reports of elder abuse seriously, and will respond promptly. This includes the following steps:

Engagement: Our priority is the safety of the affected resident/s. We aim to address allegations of elder abuse while at the same time respecting the wishes of the affected party. We will engage regularly throughout the process and document all relevant discussions. Affected residents are encouraged to involve other trusted support parties throughout the process (for example a friend or committee member).

Investigation: All reports of abuse will be investigated promptly and thoroughly by management. If necessary, external agencies may be engaged including the police.

Notification: Listed emergency contacts on our system will be notified and encouraged to participate in addressing the matter (where it is considered appropriate to do so).

Cognitive Concerns: Where management are concerned that the victim lacks capacity to make informed decisions due to a health condition, emergency contacts or external authorities may be engaged to assist with or without the consent of the resident.

Timeframes: Hindmarsh management will respond to reports of elder abuse as soon as possible and no later than 7 workings days from the report. Note that the reporter of elder abuse may not be advised of the response due to our privacy obligations.

Resolution

Hindmarsh management will make every effort to seek a resolution between the abuser and the victim. Where management (or any other party) or not satisfied that the welfare concerns of the victim have been addressed, the matter may be escalated. Where concerns are serious, this may be referred to an external party as per the contacts section in this policy.

Where the wishes of the affected resident prevent a satisfactory resolution (and there are no concerns for the mental capacity of the resident to make decisions), Hindmarsh management will continue to support the victim of the abuse including regularly checking in, monitoring and documenting any incidents or observations of concern.

Access and Revision

The latest copy of this policy is to be stored in libraries of Hindmarsh villages and on the village notice board. A copy can be provided to residents or other interested parties to review upon request.

This policy is to be reviewed by Hindmarsh management on a 2-yearly basis.

Contacts

Older Persons Abuse Prevention Referral and Information Line (APRIL)
PH: (02) 6205 3535
https://www.legalaidact.org.au/opals

ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS)
PH (02) 6242 5060

Public Trustee and Guardian (PTG)
PH (02) 6207 9800

ACT Police Seniors Liaison Officer
PH 131 444

1800ELDERHelp
1800 353 374

ACT Human Rights Commission
6205 2222
www.hrc.act.gov.au

References

The sources used to prepare this policy are listed below:

ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS), *Elder Abuse,*
https://adacas.org.au/information-resources/services-for-older-persons/elder-abuse/

Ageing and Disability Commission, *Elder Abuse Prevention Toolkit,* October 2022, Elder abuse prevention toolkit (nsw.gov.au)

Public Trustee and Guardian (PTG) for the ACT, *Elder Abuse Fact-Sheet,*
Located at Publications & forms - Public Trustee and Guardian (act.gov.au)