

# Power and abuse: Video 4

## Transcript

- Okay. So you're working in a residential setting and you notice a family member of one of the residents is taking money from their purse.
- The family member explains that the resident has asked them to buy some personal items for them. But you are unconvinced.
- They also speak about their family member as if they were a child.
- You feel that they might be taking financial advantage of the older person, what do you do?
- So me as a personal care worker, when I see something like that, the first initiative that I take is to take that to the nurse or supervisor, whoever is in charge and to investigate it more.
- Yeah.
- To see what is happening.
- First thing is also to have a conversation with the client about it, see if they've noticed anything or 'oh yeah I realized that some of my money 'for you know when I used to go to art isn't there anymore' 'cause they also might spot things and they might not connect the dots or they might not think that the people closest to them would try to take advantage of them.
- Financial abuse actually to elders occurs quite a lot in different settings and also emotional abuse and physical abuse.
- Yeah. So it's often something that you might witness and not quite know what to do about it and it's always good if you can to approach the person And in a non confrontational way is good rather than being confronting with them just to ask the question and if they've answered and said "well I'm buying items" but you're still not convinced then I think the way you said to go to management is the best course next to do. Also it's good to monitor the situation yourself. It's good to record things, write them down if you see things happening, write down times and dates of things and keep notes and you never know this could've been something that could be going on for some time.
- True. And it's good to have evidence there to give to your manager to start investigating.

- Yeah that is very true and I think like, especially with financial abuse, there's always an overlap between financial abuse and emotional abuse and other abuses. And sometimes this abuse especially the psychological ones are very hard to see.

- Yep, that's right, yeah.

- You really have to dive deep into it to actually investigate and see what is actually happening. But I think it's a good idea to actually have that confrontation, to have that discussion with the family member to see what is actually happening. When it gets to a point where you feel it's outside of your job role then you can progress and move on to management.

- What types of elder abuse and financial abuse have you been aware of, and how can staff prevent elder abuse by either staff or family members.

- In my years working as a carer, I've seen a couple of abuses take place. And most of the time the ones that are more evident are the ones like financial abuse and the physical abuse where you'd go into the residents room and you know maybe you're assisting them with a shower and you realize there's so much bruises on their body and you're like no this seems unusual, what is happening? So immediately you know there's a possibility of something happening. I think financial abuse is something you can also investigate into and most of the time these people or like the family member wouldn't come out to say 'this is what is happening to me' especially where they feel so vulnerable and sometimes there's a lot of intimidation going on. So they really find it difficult to voice out and I think it is, as a carer, your duty of care to actually get into it and see what is actually happening and see how you can help.

- Every time you start going into any agencies or things like that they go for a bunch of training with you and they talk about the abuse that could go on. The first one is like the situation we had initially which is financial abuse. Other ones would be emotional you know someone who's verbally abusing someone or manipulating them emotionally and making them feel guilty or making them feel like they have to do somethings.

- Even physical abuse, if you notice, if you're doing home care or something like that and obviously they have family members or friends that come over and you notice bruising or marking, it might be a fall but you need to report up on it as well.

- Personally I've had this observation in the workplace where I used to work. There was this lady who was a carer and she would come to work and she would always put her problems to this resident that we had and like it started off as normal conversation 'oh today was really hard coming, my car broke down' and I didn't know what to do, and I need money 'and I'm not getting enough' and so the resident felt the need to help, she wanted to help her so she was like 'oh how much' you know? And she was 'oh I need \$200' so she signed a cheque \$200 but eventually the carer realized oh this is an advantage for me to actually exploit more. So the next time she came in and she's like 'oh there's something else happened' and it was even a bigger thing and she needed \$1000 dollars so you can tell it is really true how it can start really small and it can start very innocent but eventually people see there is actually room to exploit and do other things, yeah.

- And it can lead on to physical abuse as well I was working with a client and noticed every time I'd go to visit him he would have bruises around his legs he had suffered from polio and was in a wheelchair and he was also in his 70s and I found out from him one day he was crying when I went in there and he told me his daughter who lived with him had been hitting him. And his daughter had also started taking money from his wallet and his bank account. She'd had herself put on as a signatory and he'd agreed to that so when he confronted her around this with his bank statement she had begun to threaten him and physically start abusing him so that was an investigation that the police ended up being brought into and she ended up actually, because he had divulged the information she really attacked him physically after that. So over the years I've seen quite a few family members actually escalate the financial abuse into physical assault and it takes a while to build trust with the person to get them to tell you about it or for you to notice something and for them to feel safe enough to be able to share with you what's going on.

- And there's a lot of horrible stuff that goes on but there's also sexual abuse as well. Touching people inappropriately or even just not respecting their modesty and you know having the door open when they're changing, things like that that really take away someones dignity.

- And also one thing I've realized as a personal care worker especially in the aged care industry, everything is so fast paced, so sometimes you don't really have that time to get into it and see what is actually happening especially abuses such as psychological where there is no physical evidence to show it takes time to investigate and see what is happening but most of the time as a carer its do this, do this, do that and you always running and there's no time to actually sit down with your resident.

- That's true.

- And have that interaction with them and see what is actually going on.

- And often organizations are under resourced.

- Yeah.

- So staff are doing too many duties, too many hours and don't have the time to stop and reflect or to report or they see something and they think they'll get back to it but they don't get time to get back it. And there can be a culture in the workplace where it's not safe to report either so you might witness something and wonder who to go to because there's a culture of not saying anything when something happens and that's often the case with some organizations you have to actually have a lot of courage to step out and report even knowing that it's not actually the way things are done in that organization.

- True. I think the other observation, so I started teaching individual support and disability and it gets to a time where you take your students out for placement so normally when the students come back that is a self-evaluation and you go through what was going on in the workplace and most of the times what they came back with was the working environment and the culture there 'cause they learned so much and going to the workplace and realizing that people don't actually do what they have to do and so it puts a lot of pressure on them and they don't know what to do,

should I report it? 'cause they don't want to stand out being like you a student and normally too, you wanna get a job afterwards so they end up getting into the culture and just blending in and they start to do whatever everyone else is doing.

- I've seen that happen myself a lot. I was actually training a class and I was the guest tutor who came in at the end of a two year course at TAFE and these people had been out in placement for the last three or four weeks and I was doing actually a workshop on abuse and neglect and at the end of the workshop for two hours a student put their hand up and said "so at what point is it okay "to actually hit a client?" and they had been out in placement and I asked the question "who else has that question?" and half a dozen people put their hand up. And it turned out they had all been in placement in a certain organization where they'd witnessed a staff there hitting clients and they were told it's okay sometimes because they're non verbal, they don't understand what's happening and sometimes they just need a bit of a clip around their ears to get them going so that was a culture into that workplace which then was laid open and investigated so it's about people knowing what is wrong and going out to the workplace knowing it's wrong but then having the courage to speak out about it as well that is the difference because it can have repercussions on a worker in a organization to actually speak out about what's really happening there it's not something you're taught in training as a mandatory thing so much as to speak out about what you witness often it's about hold on to your job at all costs and don't risk losing your job and then you can look at what's happening and whether it needs to be changed or not and whether it needs to be reported. It's something we've gotta change actually in the disability sector.

- Definitely.