

Understanding Our Clients

Older people

What do I need to understand to work more effectively with older clients?

- Elder abuse has all the complexities of domestic and family violence, often magnified by the vulnerabilities that come with age.
- Older people in our society often start to feel invisible and that they are not being heard. They feel like they don't have power over their own decision making or that things are being done to them rather than with or for them. It's important that we shift that balance in our interactions.
- It's important to recognise that complex problems with a complex client group requires a nuanced response. You will need to allocate more time and think about how you interact with an older person.
- Sadly, a lot of the elder abuse that we see in our services is perpetrated by family members. Those family dynamics have been going on for a long time. One interaction alone will not shift that older person's perspective. It's important to think about ways that you can build up trust with your client.
- Let them tell their story, giving them opportunities to speak without anyone else in the room.
- Be respectful and take the time to look for ways that you can support that older person.

Support services for non-legal issues – referral options

Online referral databases

These online databases may also assist you to find appropriate non-legal services for your client.

- [WayAhead Directory](#) – online database used to find local services, make referrals and access mental health information and resources.
- [Ask Izzy](#) – search over 350,000 services to find housing, meals, healthcare, counselling, legal advice, addiction treatment and more.
- [Data Diction LINCS](#) – LINCS is used by almost all councils in the Sydney area and lists community services
- [My Community Directory](#) – directory of health and community services in NSW and other states.
- [Infoxchange](#) – national database of community support services.

Action learning activities

- Reflect on the points raised in the [Understanding Our Clients video](#) and consider if there are aspects you could improve on in the way you work with older clients. Take action to make changes where appropriate.
- Think about how you can interact with your client to empower them to make their own decisions.
- Think about how you might develop a rapport with your client and put this into action when you meet. Consider what worked well and what you would do differently next time.
- Discuss support services for non-legal issues with your client and help your client access these services if required.
- Review one or more of the resources below and consider how you can apply any insights to your practice.

Useful resources

- [Legal Aid NSW Elder Abuse Service](#) – refer to the Community Legal Education section on our elder abuse webpage for links to elder abuse resources.
- [The Legal Aid NSW Podcast Channel](#) that you can access via our Podbean account or wherever you get your podcasts. The series covers a variety of topics. Use the search function or topic list to find podcasts that may be relevant
- [NSW Ageing & Disability Commission resources](#) are free and increase awareness of abuse, and the commission is a helpful referral point for clients.
- **Compass** is an initiative of EAAA (Elder Abuse Action Australia) and is funded by the Attorney-General's Department. The site contains a number of [Elder Abuse Resources](#) for service providers.
- [The Bugmy Bar Book](#) summarises key research relating to social disadvantage and deprivation. It is hosted on the Public Defenders Website and is designed to equip lawyers with a sophisticated, accurate understanding of the impacts adverse experiences can have upon individuals.
- [Legal Aid NSW Quality Standards Manual](#) – this document outlines the practice standards, client service standards, panel requirements and law practice requirements that apply to your role.