



# GATHERING INSIGHTS FROM THE ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION FUND

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A learning and insights review  
prepared for the Office for  
Seniors

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**Te Tari Kaumātua**  
Office for Seniors



**dovetail**  
insight for action and change

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## Executive summary

### About the Elder Abuse Prevention Fund

Abuse of older people (also known as elder abuse) in New Zealand is an understudied issue, and there is a lack of comprehensive research and public awareness regarding the mistreatment of older people. The abuse of older people (AOP), encompassing various forms of physical, emotional, financial, and psychological harm, and neglect, often remains hidden due to societal attitudes and the covert nature of abuse.

In 2022, the Office for Seniors provided eleven one-off grants of up to \$25,000 for initiatives aiming to prevent the abuse of older people through the Elder Abuse Prevention Fund (EAPF).

### About this review

The Ministry of Social Development commissioned this review to explore the learning and insights from the initiatives that received funding from the EAPF. This review has gathered practice-based insights and information contributing to the broader knowledge base to enhance understanding of the scale, prevalence, and nature of the abuse of older people in New Zealand.

The project involved a review of relevant documentation and nine semi-structured interviews with staff involved in the planning and implementation of the EAPF-funded initiatives ('the participants').

### Summary of findings

Participants reported several aspects that worked well:

- Most were successful in engaging older people in their communities to take up their services and participate in their research.
- Establishing and building trusting relationships with older people was viewed as having worked well, with the subsequent disclosures of abuse or general help seeking which eventuated from this viewed as an indication of its success.
- Clear communication regarding confidentiality, thoughtful service design and collaborative whānau-centred approaches were identified as key in supporting this work.
- Having skilled, diverse networks to draw on and competent and well-resourced staff were central to the success and safety of the initiatives.

Participants reported several challenges they faced in the delivery of the initiatives:

- A significant challenge for many organisations was the unearthing of considerable demand in communities. Organisations felt a responsibility to continue addressing these needs; however, this was typically above and beyond what the funding could support.
- EAPF initiatives highlighted gaps in organisations' networks – particularly in regard to services.
- The nature of the abuse of older people itself contributes to this being a difficult space to work in. Complex family dynamics and the hidden and stigmatised nature of abuse means the work is labour intensive, time consuming, and requires specific, specialist skills.

Participants shared the knowledge they gained about the abuse of older people and the broader sector challenges in addressing this issue in New Zealand. Several risk factors and drivers of abuse

were identified by participants through the process, including social isolation and loneliness, poverty and housing insecurity/unaffordability, the limited capacity and heightened vulnerability of older people, the covert and hidden nature of abuse and the complexity of perpetrator intent.

Participants also identified systemic challenges that can make addressing the issue of AOP challenging, including broad definitions of abuse, limited reporting frameworks, and a lack of safeguarding legislation, as well as insufficient research, statistics, and information sharing in the sector.

Significantly, participants in the review highlighted the value they gained from being able to initiate activity through the EAPF, and that their initiatives uncovered a substantial scale of need in this space. The initiatives funded by the EAPF have made an important contribution to older communities and a developing field of research in New Zealand.

## Introduction

### About the Elder Abuse Prevention Fund

In 2022, the Elder Abuse Prevention Fund (EAPF) provided one-off grants of up to \$25,000 to initiatives aiming to prevent the abuse of older people (AOP). The fund was administered by the Office for Seniors, with funding for the 2022 round provided by Te Puna Aonui (the Executive Board for the Elimination of Family Violence and Sexual Violence).

The 2022 funding round prioritised grassroots initiatives and organisations that do not typically work in the abuse of older people prevention field, alongside initiatives targeting diverse communities (e.g., rainbow, disabled or Māori). Eleven unique initiatives of varying type, size and scope received funding through the EAPF<sup>1</sup>.

### Overview of funded initiatives

Nine EAPF funded initiatives participated in this review. Participation was voluntary – see ‘Approach and methodology’ in this section. A summary of each initiative has been provided below, with a more detailed overview included in the appendix to this report.

#### Initiative one: Elder abuse education workshops ([Family Focus](#))

Initiative One delivered a series of educational sessions for older individuals which were followed by a recreational activity to reinforce learning. Sessions covered topics such as best practice Enduring Power of Attorney services (EPOA’s), safety planning for later life and financial mentoring, as well as guest facilitated talks with organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Age Concern, Work and Income New Zealand and Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.

#### Initiative two: Uplifting takatāpui and rainbow elder Voices: Tukua kia tū takitahi ngā whetū o te rangi ([Hohou te Rongo Kahukura](#))

Initiative Two looked to bring visibility to the experiences and stories of takatāpui and rainbow elders after finding that research in this area was limited. This research initiative explored the contexts of discrimination on the lives of these older individuals through a survey and a series of in-depth interviews. The survey, which was distributed and promoted widely across New Zealand, received 424 valid responses. The project produced a final report which is available online<sup>2</sup>.

#### Initiative three: Senior care advocacy support ([Manchester House](#))

Initiative Three involved establishing a Senior Care Advocate role in an existing senior hub setting. The position was shared by two staff members who each dedicated eight hours a week to the role. The Senior Care Advocates provided one-on-one advocacy and support for older people with unmet needs and acted as a conduit to specialist service agencies who provided assistance as required.

#### Initiative four: Enduring power of attorney support ([Porirua Kāpiti Community Law Centre](#))

Porirua Kāpiti Community Law Centre had previous experience providing educational seminars within their community and recognised an opportunity to expand these to the wider Wellington region. Seminars were developed to include an in-depth focus on enduring power of attorney

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<sup>1</sup> The details of all Elder Abuse Prevention Fund initiatives are available on the Office for Seniors website. See: [Elder Abuse Prevention Fund | Te Tari Kaumātua \(officeforseniors.govt.nz\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> The report and documentation are available on the website of Hohou te Rongo Kahukura: [Uplifting Takatāpui and Rainbow Elder Voices | Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura](#)

(EPOA) processes and the abuse of older people. The initiative raised awareness of the abuse of older people, emphasised the importance of having a well-drafted EPOAs and educated older people on best-practice EPOA selection and process. As a result of the initiative, a large number of applications for EPOA and Welfare Guardianship's were generated in the community, free of charge to older people.

#### **Initiative Five: Kaumātua peer-support ([Te Ahi Kaa](#))**

Initiative Five developed out of an observed increased risk of abuse situations for kaumātua after the COVID-19 lockdowns. The project involved raising awareness of the abuse of older people in a one-on-one and a community-based setting, with a specific focus on financial abuse. Topics ranged from keeping safe online to engaging with whānau to increase understanding of kaumātua abuse and how to keep each other safe. Following awareness raising, Te Ahi Kaa experienced an increase of requests for support from kaumātua and their whānau.

#### **Initiative Six: Home support community advocate ([Wesley Community Action](#))**

Initiative Six recognised a need for intensive support for older people with unmet needs in the community. Wesley Community Action saw a gap between long term needs of older people which could require intensive support and what homecare support agencies are able to provide. The organisation has witnessed through their own work in this area that when the basic needs of older people are not met, they can put themselves in vulnerable situations to meet these needs (for example, providing personal and/or confidential details to others in setting up online banking). Addressing these needs as they arise was seen to be an important part of the prevention of abuse of older people.

#### **Initiative Seven: interRAI<sup>3</sup> screening research ([University of Otago](#))**

Initiative Seven brought together clinical experience in acute inpatient psychogeriatric care and biostatistician expertise to review the way that the interRAI needs assessment tool screens for potential abuse of older people. The initiative recognised the interRAI as an opportunity to start learning about the abuse of older people in New Zealand as it is mandatory and consistently used in several environments and provides digitally available data for analysis. However, the tool has been shown by this group's research to be under-reporting potential cases of abuse. Initiative Seven manipulated the algorithm of the interRAI to become more sensitive to potential abuse, without changing the tool itself. The new algorithm increased the flag rate for potential abuse from 2.5% to 5.9%, which has the potential to have far-reaching, positive implications for a large number of older adults if further research supports this strategy.

#### **Initiative Eight: Technology-facilitated connection ([Kilbirnie Lyall Bay Community Centre](#))**

Initiative Eight involved establishing a new space within an existing community centre where online conversations could be facilitated between older people and their loved ones. The converted storage room was a private space that could be booked out for this purpose, but also doubled as an area where members of the community could speak with centre staff confidentially about potentially abusive situations or experiences. Members of staff listened to them and let them know about the help available to them, including the Elder Abuse helpline. The space was fully booked out during the funded period and proved to be very popular among older people who enjoyed being able to

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<sup>3</sup> InterRAI is a suite of clinical assessment instruments. It is developed by interRAI™, an international consortium of experts, and licensed for use in New Zealand by interRAI Services, part of Te Whatu Ora - Health New Zealand. InterRAI is mandatory in aged residential care and home and community services for older people living in the community.

connect with friends and family who they were unable to see in person due to international distance and mobility issues.

### **Initiative Nine: Research with Chinese and Afghan communities ([Age Concern Waikato](#))**

Initiative Nine identified a gap in available data and the published literature regarding the experiences of older migrants and former refugees in relation to abuse and undertook research to address this. This included a series of focus groups and semi-structured interviews and incorporated the use of a validated tool to structure discussions - these included members of the Chinese community and the Afghan community. Central to the success and safety of the programme was the use of a professional interpreting service to ensure that the translations accurately conveyed meaning and concepts.

### **Purpose of this learning and insights review**

The Ministry of Social Development, in partnership with the Office for Seniors, commissioned this review to gather learning and insights from initiatives funded from the EAPF.

There were two primary areas for insight gathering:

- **Practice-based insights:** Understanding what providers have learned about preventing abuse of older people through their initiatives. This included exploring what worked well, what challenges providers faced, how initiatives developed or changed over the course of the year, what would be needed to scale the initiatives, and ideas on suggestions for how to best connect others working in the field.
- **Contribution to the broader knowledge base:** Given how little is known about the abuse of older people, this aspect of the review sought to share insights into the scale, prevalence, and nature of the abuse of older people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### **Approach and methodology**

The methodology and approach for this learning and insights review was designed in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and the Office for Seniors.

This included:

- **A brief review of available literature:** A brief review was carried out to summarise some of the key knowledge areas of AOP and to situate this learning and insights review in what is currently known about this issue. An extensive review of the existing literature was out of scope of this learning and insights activity.
- **Document review:** A review of relevant material from each of the initiatives was carried out to provide context for evaluation design and semi-structured interviews. A total of 37 documents were provided by the Office for Seniors with permission from relevant grantees. These included grant proposals, initiative plans and accountability reports for each initiative.
- **Semi-structured interviews:** The eleven initiatives that received funding through the EAPF were invited to participate in a one-hour semi-structured interview. Of these, nine chose to take part.
  - **Participants:** Each initiative nominated between one and two interview participants based on availability and involvement in the initiative. Most interview participants



were involved in the management of the initiatives or in a frontline capacity. In the case of one interview, the two participants both held strategic roles within their organisation. One initiative utilised a kaupapa Māori approach to working with older people and this interview was conducted by a Kaupapa Māori research and evaluation specialist.

- **Interview format:** Participants were invited to take part either online or in person. All nine opted to participate online. The interviews were, on average, one-hour in length and took place in August and September 2023. Interviews were recorded, with permission, and transcribed through a private transcription service.
- **Analysis:** A thematic analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken. This method is used to systematically explore, identify, and map out themes. The approach taken followed a process of familiarisation with the interview data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing and mapping themes; defining and naming themes; and reporting.
- **Interview participation ethical considerations:** Participation in the review was optional. Research participants chose to participate, having been informed in writing of the learning and insights review objectives and their involvement in it. Participants signed a consent form prior to taking part in an interview.
- **Reporting:** General themes are reported anonymously, but participants have given specific permission to include the name of their organisation with a summary of the initiatives carried out. Quotes from interviews have been used to support themes where appropriate, and in instances where interviewees have drawn on client stories these have been included separately.

Independent ethics approval was sought from and approved by the Aotearoa Research Ethics Committee (AREC). This was to ensure that the research design was ethically sound, that the review adhered to rigorous ethical standards, and that any potential risks to the initiative and to participants were minimised. Approval ID: *ARECC23\_28*.

## Broader context for the review: Abuse of older people

This section briefly summarises some of the key knowledge areas of AOP to situate this learning and insights review in what is currently known about this issue internationally and in Aotearoa New Zealand. For a comprehensive literature scan on the prevention of AOP, please see: Hynds and Leonard (2023).

The abuse of older people in New Zealand is an understudied area and there is a lack of comprehensive research and public awareness regarding the mistreatment of older individuals. This form of abuse encompasses physical, emotional, financial, and psychological harm, and neglect, and it often remains hidden due to societal attitudes and the covert nature of abuse.

## Drivers of the abuse of older people

The drivers of the abuse of older people are often interconnected and can be influenced by individual, relational, societal, and structural dynamics. Some key drivers of the AOP noted in the literature are:

- **Caregiver stress and burnout:** Family members and caregivers responsible for the care of older individuals may experience stress, burnout, and emotional strain, which can lead to abusive behaviours (Ministry of Social Development, 2019; Woodhead, 2018).
- **Dependency and power imbalance:** The abuse of older people can stem from imbalanced power dynamics, where older adults depend on others for care and support. Individuals can seek to exert control and exploit this dependency (Spangler & Brand, 2007; Lin & Giles, 2013).
- **Health issues and cognitive impairment:** Physical and mental health issues, including cognitive impairment, such as dementia, and decreased mobility can increase vulnerability to abuse (Păroşanu, 2017).
- **Isolation and loneliness:** Social isolation and loneliness can increase the risk of AOP. Older individuals who lack social connections may be more susceptible to abuse, as they have fewer people to detect and report mistreatment (Park, 2014; Ministry of Social Development, 2019).
- **Socio-economic conditions:** Poverty and financial hardship of older people and/or their family members are key risk factors in abuse (Boon-Nanai et al., 2022; Gray, LaBore, & Carter, 2021).
- **Healthcare and caregiver training:** Inadequate training of healthcare professionals and caregivers can result in suboptimal care and, in some cases, abusive behaviours (Tough, Brinkhof, & Fekete, 2022).

## Abuse of older Māori

AOP is a significant concern that impacts on older people across New Zealand regardless of ethnicity. Research into the abuse of older people in Māori communities is an evolving field, and efforts are being made to better understand the unique challenges and opportunities for prevention in this space. While research on the abuse of older Māori is still limited, there are some trends and considerations that have been reported in the literature:

- **Colonisation and racism:** Experiences of colonisation and cultural dislocation have had lasting effects on Māori communities, potentially influencing family dynamics and

contributing to stressors that can lead to the abuse of older people. Racism, negative stereotypes, and discrimination are clearly evident in social service and health provision for older Māori people (Savage et al., 2020; Waitangi Tribunal, 2019; Ryan, Grey, & Mischiewski, 2019). It has been acknowledged in the literature that definitions and approaches to family violence (which can include AOP) need to include analysis of the impacts of structural factors like colonisation and racism (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2010). Culturally specific interventions and supports should reflect the lived experiences of Māori, the importance of whānau, and how they may have become disconnected from culture, language, and identity (Hokowhitu et al., 2020).

- **Whānau, hapū and iwi:** Whānau, hapū and iwi connections are central to Māoritanga. Within te ao Māori, relationships and interconnectedness extend beyond whānau to include hapū and iwi. As Māori whakapapa is central to belonging and identity, these connections can act both as protective factors against the abuse of older people and as potential sources of abuse, depending on the dynamics within a particular family or community. Cultural norms and values can also influence how Māori elders are cared for and respected. Māori researchers have previously acknowledged that a failure to understand the broad nature of whānau can inevitably lead to the failure of family violence prevention efforts (Cooper, 2012).

## Gaps

The literature on the abuse of older people, both internationally and in New Zealand, has considerable gaps or limitations, some of which include:

- **There is no international consistency in definitions and measurements adopted:** There is still a lack of consensus on the precise definition of AOP and consistent measurement methods across different countries. This hampers accurate cross-country comparisons and the development of universally applicable prevention strategies (Gholipour et al., 2020).
- **AOP is likely under-reported:** AOP remains underreported, mainly due to factors such as shame, fear, cognitive impairment, and lack of awareness. Understanding the true scale and nature of the abuse of older people is challenging due to its hidden nature and inconsistent data (Te Aorerekura, 2022; Ministry of Social Development, 2020; 2019; Păroşanu, 2017; Hall et al., 2022).
- **Understanding of the impact of abuse on intersectional older individuals is limited:** There is a need for more research that focuses on specific populations of older adults who are at greater risk of abuse due to factors such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or immigration status (Finnegan, 2022; Morrissey et al., 2021).
- **Cultural and indigenous perspectives:** Despite growing recognition of the unique experiences and needs of older Māori and Pacific peoples, there is a lack of research on culturally embedded, collective care models to prevent and/or address the abuse of older people (Hokowhitu et al., 2020).

## Identifying key areas of success

This review sought to understand key areas of success across the range of initiatives and explore the factors that contributed to this. There were three areas which the majority of initiatives described as working well, as summarised below:



### Initiatives achieved high engagement and participation from older people

Most initiatives were successful in engaging older people and succeeded in doing so by ensuring services were accessible and promoting them through networks.



### Initiatives were able to quickly build trust with older people

Many of the initiatives successfully built high-trust relationships with older people in their communities.



### Initiatives had access to skills and knowledge to support disclosures of abuse

Many of the service-based initiatives resulted in disclosures of abuse and were able to tap into specialist organisations and internal expertise to appropriately manage disclosures.

## Initiatives achieved high engagement and participation from older people

In service-based and research-based initiatives, engaging older individuals to participate in programme activities, services, and research was crucial. Many participants reported success in this area and provided valuable insights into how they effectively engaged older people at the beginning of their initiatives.

### Accessibility of services is a practical consideration that can significantly impact on the engagement of older people

Ensuring services were accessible to older people was essential for supporting and maintaining engagement through the various initiatives. Reduced mobility and driving restrictions meant transportation was a barrier to engagement for many older people. Participants explained that initiatives carefully selected the location of services to enable accessibility. One initiative provided transportation to and from the venue and others delivered services in older people's homes. Another participant spoke about moving the location around in future so that venues would be closer to older adults, increasing the accessibility of the initiative.

Two participants emphasised accessibility for older individuals with specific needs and disabilities. This included addressing mobility concerns with access and egress in buildings and implementing technology options for those with hearing impairments. Additionally, providing services at no cost to older individuals and accommodating English as a second language were identified as ways to ensure the accessibility of services.

*"Accessibility is a big one here. That can be accessibility of the building but also of maneuvering around physically or getting to somewhere - that stops a lot of people getting places and getting things and getting experiences."*

*“We have a lot of people that have disabilities. Some are profoundly deaf, and we sign, but we also have two hearing aids, so getting good earphones that go over those. All the little thoughtful things that increase the experience for our people.”*

### **Promotion and recruitment of elder abuse initiatives can require innovative and creative approaches to achieve engagement**

The sensitive nature of AOP meant initiatives had to be creative in promoting their services and recruiting project-participants. When speaking about engaging older people, one participant advised “You can’t just put a full-page ad in the paper,” and another asked “If I had said ‘we’re having a meeting about senior abuse’, can you imagine the attendance?”. To overcome this, various approaches were taken to promote engagement. Word of mouth proved to be a powerful tool for some, while others leveraged new and existing networks to extend their reach.

*“It was more word of mouth. In a group of 71 people, those 71 people go out and tell 10 people. People are actually rocking up here now and are coming specifically to see someone.”*

*“We went really hard at getting it out and about in the world. We asked libraries all over the country to put up posters in their libraries and they did. We worked with other organisations who put out material through their national newsletter, they put out material through their legal magazines. Their elder abuse champion went around the country putting posters up for us everywhere. We ended up having more than 450 responses, which we were absolutely thrilled with.”*

Participants spoke about how conversations about the abuse of older people can be confronting. In overcoming this, initiatives included information and services about the abuse of older people as part of a broader offering to generate interest. One initiative, for example, included activities such as pot planting and flax weaving to bring levity to the topic. Another offered free legal services and included information on the abuse of older people as part of these seminars. Leveraging the existing trust felt towards community hubs was seen as another way to support engagement without having to specifically cite the prevention of the abuse of older people as the primary reason for the service.

*“We need a connected service, like the Hub, because we have like something cheery to give them and then you can get in on the end of that you can talk about the elder abuse.”*

### **Initiatives were able to quickly build trust with older people**

Following initial engagement of older individuals, building high-trust relationships was seen to be an important next step. Some initiatives were able to leverage existing relationships and to work with older individuals and have conversations about AOP – which can be a difficult topic for many due to its stigmatised nature. Other initiatives that did not have pre-existing relationships within their communities were able to share insights into how they were able to quickly build trust and rapport.

### **Existing relationships with community members allowed organisations to rapidly establish AOP interventions**

Some organisations had pre-existing relationships with community members, which allowed them to quickly build rapport and begin having sensitive conversations about AOP. This could be either



through direct relationships or the trust built in existing community services and hubs. The existing relationships of organisations were important for the success of initiatives like this, which required rapid set-up and implementation.

*“We have those relationships; it would have been very difficult and it’s probably not a project I would have attempted to start had we not had that ground-level already. I know in this job what people share with me - which is a lot of the time very personal - is because they’ve known me for so long and I’ve been here consistently.”*

### **Creating confidential and anonymous services meant that older people felt comfortable to have sensitive conversations**

For initiatives carried out by organisations that did not have pre-existing, high-trust relationships with older people in their communities, there was a need to build trust in other ways. Many participants referenced confidentiality and anonymity of services as essential to this. One initiative kept the confidentiality rules on the door of one of their rooms so that individuals could understand the process before reaching out for a conversation. Others used forms at the beginning of a conversation to clarify client and staff expectations.

*“Before we started seeing clients, we formulated intake forms and confidentiality forms. They need to know that that’s done in a confidential way and all the information is held securely - that’s quite a big thing to build the trust. The people that I’ve seen, it’s building that relationship and getting the information. You’re not going to get that information unless you’ve got that trust and this is how we build the trust by saying your files are locked away in a cabinet, only I can get to them.”*

### **Designing and co-designing services that incorporate a range of activities and information can support buy-in and trust**

Participants found service design was influential in establishing trusting relationships with older people, particularly when discussing a potentially confronting topic like abuse. One participant spoke about designing daily workshops with an education component and a lighter activity. Another initiative introduced general information before delving into the topic of abuse. Participants also noted how language was important in building trust when speaking about the abuse of older people. For one initiative this meant changing the language from abuse to “elder harm”, as softer language was more approachable.

*“I manned the table at an expo in elder abuse and I just noticed a real difference between [our] table and the elder abuse table. People’s faces just went from “Wow this is really interesting, I might want to do that,” to “I don’t actually want to know too much about this.” So, we decided it would be better to term it elder harm because it just seems to be less confronting.”*

Some participants also spoke about involving older people in the design of services and allowing them to drive the direction and development process to create buy-in and trust. For one initiative this meant having older people deliver the programmes, and for another it meant being flexible to the needs of communities and being willing to make changes when something wasn’t working.

*“I was really proud of how it developed because we are community pushed and community developed and it’s not always the vision I have in my head, and I’m like okay, this is how it’s going, they’re all pushing in this direction, I’ll go with that, and we’ll just see how it goes and we’ll tweak it as we go long. So that’s kind of how this project also went as well.”*

### **Client Example: Leveraging existing relationships and trust in community**

“I came into work a couple of weeks back and I had a chap sleeping in our foyer and he just needed some information, but I start work at eight o'clock in the morning. It was freezing and he had spent the night sleeping in the foyer. That should not happen. He was probably about nearly 70 years old, and he’d had an argument with his sister, and he had nowhere to go. So that’s again the connection of the service, knowing that this place is here and a little bit of help”.

### **Initiatives had access to skills and knowledge to support disclosures of abuse**

Although the project focus of the initiatives was on primary prevention, many of the service-based initiatives resulted in disclosures of abuse and help-seeking from older individuals. Participants viewed this as an indication that they had successfully fostered trust and promoted education and awareness in older communities. Having access to expert skills and knowledge – either externally or within initiative organisations – meant that staff from the initiatives felt able to respond appropriately in instances where abuse was disclosed.

### **Relationships with specialist service providers in the wider network supported appropriate responses and referrals**

Many organisations designed their initiatives to support primary prevention, so having relationships with specialist providers with the appropriate skills and knowledge to support disclosures was vital. In some cases, this meant seeking out advice to support an individual with a disclosure. In other cases, this meant making referrals to appropriate support to meet the needs of the older person.

*“I have really good relationships with our local Police, so I use them all the time and that’s been a big help. With my job in the past, I’ve always connected with social workers and so when I’ve had issues I often turn to people and say, “Hey this is the situation, what would you do, what could I try, how can I get through this, what can I do with this person or this behaviour?”*

*“I’m not going to go to someone’s house that I do not know, I am not trained in that, I am not a specialist in that. There’s lots of people out there who have amazing training and are experts in their field and we pull on them all the time in our job. I get really good at getting to know people and going ‘This is when I need a bit of help from you’, because it’s interesting learning but it’s also got to be the best for the person that you’re providing the care for.”*

One participant described having extremely passionate staff willing to go the extra mile to support someone who had made a disclosure of abuse or was seeking help; however, it was seen to be

important to engage people who are qualified and skilled in this space to ensure the safety of older people and staff. Having strong networks in place to support disclosures of abuse was seen to assist staff to maintain professional boundaries as they knew any referrals made would be handled by specialists and the older people would get the support they needed.

*“They're nice people in my team and they want to help. I'm like that as well but there are some areas and there's sometimes when it's a no, I'm sorry that's not something that I do working here. So that's been an interesting learning curve for the team, learning those lines.”*

A broader outcome of the EAPF was the opportunity it provided for initiative staff to link with other organisations working in the field, with several participants reporting stronger sector connections as a result of participating in the fund. They spoke about the ongoing impact this would have for their organisations in terms of being able to support older people in their communities.

*“It's all intertwined, more so now than it has been. I mean the role has allowed us to get closer to the other agencies. We've done a lot of networking. That was needed to get referrals and so forth and just to raise people's awareness about the role.”*

### **Initiatives utilised the distinct knowledge and skills sets of internal staff to achieve outcomes for older people**

Participants identified the importance of a skilled, competent, and well-equipped workforce to respond to the unique nature of this work and the vulnerability of older people. Participants emphasised the importance of practical skills, emotional intelligence, patience, and life experience to ensure staff can relate to and attend to the unique needs of older people.

*“We hired a support worker that was very skilled, emotionally intelligent and life wise, knew the processes of selling a house and what it would take, understood the processes of helping someone moving into care.”*

*“We have a social worker who's a kaumātua, who's also very well connected to our kaumātua. She is of retirement age but she's like 'I'm not retiring'. But it means we have this connection to our kaumātua because the other challenge for us is, in terms of our tikanga, how is it that we as a rangatahi in the eyes of our kaumātua, to sit in front of them and have these conversations.”*

Some participants highlighted how, as a result of the funding, their organisations were better equipped to support older people in future work. This included one participant who highlighted how their staff now had a better understanding of working with older people, and teams within their organisation are working more closely together as a result. Given staff and skill shortages in this sector, they saw this as an important outcome.

*“Now there is an awareness when we're going into homes, we're checking are there older people in there that we might not know about and being able to check on their welfare. It certainly brought that team alongside the elder abuse service. The rest of the team has a much better understanding of working with older people, which I think is really important.”*

For two initiatives, drawing on the knowledge and skills of individuals and collectives beyond core staff members was an important tool in the primary prevention of AOP. This included having a kaumātua governance board and “elder advisors” involved in the planning and implementation of the initiatives and providing an ongoing vision for the initiatives. For these providers, pulling in knowledgeable and skilled people was non-negotiable.

*“We went back to all of the elder advisors and checked in with them they said we don't just want something to read from this, we want to hear elders' voices. It was totally beautiful and not something I would have thought of myself at all, which is the benefit of many voices.”*

*“Hundreds of people are responsible for this. I'm the one that gets to talk to you about it today but actually when I look at all of the whānau that have gotten us to this point and actually been a part of the kaupapa, it doesn't even just take a village, it takes an iwi to get this to a place where we are today.”*

## Understanding challenges and lessons

This review sought to understand the key challenges that organisations came up against in designing and implementing EAPF initiatives. This section summarises some of the common challenges experienced by organisations, as well as the insights gained in overcoming these. There were three areas which the majority of participants described experiencing challenges and learning lessons for similar initiative design and implementation in future:



### The initiatives demonstrated the need for ongoing AOP services and research

While initiatives appreciated the resourcing they received, they also found demand often outstripped ability to deliver and created a responsibility on providers to plug existing gaps.



### Knowledge and skill gaps within the broader network of AOP organisations

Building and deepening network connections went well in the initiatives, but also highlighted gaps in services and connections.



### AOP responses require individualised and resource intensive work

Participants spoke about the intersection of complex family dynamics and the drivers of abuse. This work requires sensitivity and resource-intensive, individualised responses.

## The initiatives demonstrated the need for ongoing AOP services and research

The initiatives generated through the EAPF were designed to plug a gap in AOP service provision and research. A concern for many participants was that the needs identified in older communities were greater than they had expected, and without sustainable, ongoing funding for these or similar initiatives these would remain unaddressed in the long term.

### Initiatives unearthed a high level of need in communities, which organisations felt a responsibility to address

During interviews, participants expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the EAPF funding round. However, many found it difficult to balance community needs with the funding duration as the demand they unearthed in communities was larger than expected and required more resources to address. Participants felt a responsibility to their communities to continue addressing the demand beyond the funding end-date.

*“Whenever you go for a grant, what happens is that grants aren't sustainable. You kind of opened a wound and then if you think you're good enough to open it, then you damn well better be good enough to follow it through because our whānau deserve that. Even though the grant and the funding and all of that has stopped, it's become a core part of what we do, and we just do it. It is challenging because we are holding a social worker, but we don't get pūtea for that social worker, we have to find it in other spaces.”*

A lack of existing community services in communities, and extremely passionate teams, meant some initiatives took on work outside of the funding scope. While some saw this as a positive, others



acknowledged the challenge of balancing worker wellbeing with community need in social service-based environments.

*“I think when there's nothing, you try to make the space as big as possible. So we have flogged ourselves with this project, honestly, because we wanted to make it as big an opportunity as we possibly could. There's been lots and lots of voluntary love given by our members and we're basically 100% in love with this project and so we've done so much beyond what we probably have been resourced to do to make it work.”*

*“Their hauora, their wellbeing is very important to me. It's my priority. We have a staff member in today, it's her day off, and I'm like ‘You're lucky I'm in a hui, when I get out of this hui you better be gone,’ because it's about her wellbeing and that's so important to us. I do notice that other providers, their staff are so run-ragged. And that's not through any fault of the provider or themselves in most situations, it's because of the passion and there's just not enough to go around.”*

### **The needs of older people will remain unaddressed without sustainably funded initiatives like those generated through the EAPF.**

Participants emphasised how their work helped fill identified community needs and gaps. Without a sustainable service, they expressed concern these gaps would remain unaddressed. Some noted the conclusion of their work would affect clients who had come to rely on their support, as well as network members who had established relationships based on mutual support and referrals.

*“It created a demand that actually outstripped our ability to provide the service and the funding was time limited. We've got all these social workers in hospitals that think that there's the service and so I'm having to manage that, which is fine but benefit of hindsight, we would have been clear upfront that this was a one-year thing.”*

*“It's a fear, you now have people that are coming here specifically or calling specifically for this and it's almost like a trust thing. How can you offer a valuable service for a year and then you're not there the next year? How do people put their faith in anything like that?”*

Participants also highlighted the high level of upfront work required to develop forms, policies, and other specific materials, alongside the investment of time and effort in developing networks and trusting relationships with older people in the community. Some were concerned this work will have been for nothing if initiatives cannot secure ongoing funding.

*“You're sitting on tenterhooks and you're waiting to see. You're committing 100% but you start thinking to yourself well gosh if this is ripped out from underneath us, we've done all of this for it to go, and that is that.”*

## Knowledge and skill gaps within the broader network of AOP organisations

As highlighted previously, participants emphasised how critical developing and deepening of network connections was for initiative success. This work supported organisations to build those connections and networks in the sector, and highlighted service availability and resource gaps. However, some participants noted the gaps they could see in their communities, specifically in primary care, to ensure older people's needs are met.

*"In between those attempts to support people in the home, there's enormous yawning gaps. If someone's struggling with mobility or with cognition and they need new clothes, who does that? If someone's heater is broken, how do you get it fixed? If the house is getting really cluttered and difficult, who does that? And there's all these things that it's no one's job to do."*

Limited referral options sometimes presented a challenge for service initiatives which came across disclosures or help-seeking in their work. One participant referred to service availability as a "post-code lottery" that impacts the types and amount of support older people can access. Several participants identified emergency housing for older people experiencing abuse as a specific service gap.

*"Where is their emergency housing? It's not appropriate for older people to be just chucked in, we have like a building and motel, they don't feel safe. So how do we get them to a place of safety? They are similar to children. Imagine pulling a child out of an abusive home and just putting them in a place all by themselves... the older people have the same anxiety and fears, when you remove them from the perpetrator."*

One participant shared that some services in the community have limited experience and knowledge in working with specific groups of older people, and this can cause harm to older people or limit referral options. This participant found some organisations working with older communities were not interested in engaging on the topic of abuse as it related to the specific demographics they worked with in New Zealand. There was also a sense that those willing to engage may not currently have the skills or resources they need to work safely in this space yet.

*"We've had fantastic support from some organisations at a national level and fantastic engagement from lots of older person services we've reached out to. We've also had groups point blank say 'Nah, none of that here thanks.' One of the most well-known older persons associations in New Zealand, point blank told us that they didn't have any gays and lesbians - I think was the word they used - in the organisation, which seemed surprising to me but there's been a bit of that."*

### Client Example: Emergency housing gaps

*"There was a 68-year-old woman who was being abused, she was living in a home with her brother-in-law. She has been beaten and it was not safe for her to go home and so our staff have to organise accommodation for her. She didn't want to return, she had no clothing, nothing. A challenge in that particular situation is there is no emergency housing for older people. Because she was battered and bruised, we had to take her to the emergency department and thankfully the hospital took her."*

## AOP responses require individualised and resource intensive work

One of the main challenges of the funded work was the labour-intensive and time-consuming nature of AOP prevention efforts. These included activities such as traveling to meet clients at various locations, including their homes, coordinating volunteers and transport to support those with mobility or transport challenges, shopping, decluttering homes, and working with extended family networks who were sometimes busy or non-responsive. Participants acknowledged that building trust with older people, particularly in initiatives that work in primary prevention by addressing unmet needs, can be very time consuming as well.

*“It’s been working really well but that takes 1.5 FTEs, a pool of about 15 volunteers, a venue, a van plus volunteers transporting other people in their cars. This stuff is resource intensive, it just is. You can’t do it on a shoestring. You can’t declutter on a shoestring, you can’t do shopping support on a shoestring, none of those are short things, they’re all quite involved, complex tasks and they take time.”*

Participants also spoke to the sensitive nature of work in AOP, and the individualised responses needed to support older people, emphasising they are not a homogenous group. It was highlighted that prevention or intervention efforts with this demographic typically necessitate personalised responses that take into account their unique socio-economic, social, and cultural needs. Family dynamics, particularly when working with those with complex conflicts, was seen to be a difficult area to navigate that required specific skills and bespoke approaches.

*“We get families in chaos and families in conflict, and we get perpetrators of abuse ringing up and crying that other people are perpetrating abuse in the same family. That could be because they don’t know that that’s what they’re doing, it could be partially because the whole family dynamics are really toxic, and this is just decades of chaos now being wreaked with an older, vulnerable person. The level of skill you need to respond in a family of chaos like that is really high, really, really high.”*

When working with whānau Māori, whānau-centred approaches also required specific skills, knowledge, and understanding. A participant spoke about the length of time it could take to work with whānau in abusive situations, advising it could take weeks to support and ensure the safety of the entire whānau. The process of *“really pulling things apart and ensuring every person in that whānau connected into that whānau, got the supports that they needed”* along with the in-depth nature of kaupapa Māori approaches, meant this work could be very labour-intensive.

*“There’s all these dynamics within Māori that we have to be aware of. We have to balance, that tauwi providers are not held to the same standard I guess and there’s a really good reason why and we should be able to do that. But it means it’s longer, it’s longer, we’re not recognised that, we’re recognised as apples for apples. While you get given this amount, they get given this amount and it’s like yeah but you’re ultimately comparing apples to pineapples. The work we do is so much more in-depth, we have so many more layers to it, there’s so much more consideration and balancing of how and why we do things.”*

### **Client Example: Primary prevention in cluttered homes**

“It’s a really long task and it takes a lot of patience to sit with someone while they go through one box at a time and decide they want to keep three quarters of the contents of that box and then where are we going to put it. This woman, everywhere she walked it was a trip hazard and she felt emotionally overwhelmed by it all. She didn’t actually have a hoarding disorder; she had packed up a bigger house to move to a smaller house as she aged and didn’t know what to do with everything that she had left over. Our support worker was able to sit with her for hours and hours and hours. I think it took about three months’ worth of work for him and he would spend three, four hours at a time with her. It really changed her life. Unless you’ve got lots of money or unless you’ve got a highly skilled, trained person who can sit with them for the many hours it takes, there is no funded support for those people.

## Insights about abuse of older people

Participants provided insights into the abuse of older people gained from their work and experiences during the EAPF initiatives. These included insights into the risk factors and drivers of abuse, the challenges faced in addressing this specific type of abuse, and the abuse of Māori kaumātua. Insights about the abuse of older people are presented within the following categories:



### Risk factors and drivers of abuse of older people

Initiatives shared their views on some of the key risks and drivers of the abuse of older people in their communities.



### Existing definitions and frameworks make AOP difficult to address

The lack of a shared legal definition of the abuse of older people and guiding frameworks / processes were seen as gaps.



### Insights for working with Māori in the space of AOP

There were some general findings in terms of cultural insights including understanding the distinct experiences of Māori in AOP and the need for whānau-centred approaches.

## Risk factors and drivers of abuse of older people

Participants provided broader insights into the risk factors and drivers of abuse they have observed within their communities. These included:

- Social isolation and loneliness.
- Poverty and housing.
- Limited capacity and heightened vulnerability.
- The covert nature of abuse.
- The complexity of intent.

### Social isolation and loneliness

Many participants were surprised by the number of older individuals who live alone and experience loneliness, which they identified as a risk factor for abuse. They believe loneliness can lead to risky behaviour and put older people in potentially dangerous situations in their pursuit of companionship. One participant highlighted how pro-social relationships safeguard against abuse by giving older people avenues to seek support and can play a role in overall mental health and wellbeing.

*“Some people don't have anyone, they have no one they can appoint, they don't have any family, they have the volunteers that visit them and apart from that they're completely isolated. That was a bit of an eyeopener, to think that people don't have anyone.”*

*“As you get lonelier and more socially isolated, you get depressed, your cognition can decline because you're not using your brain in the same way because you're not interacting with people, you eat less because what's the point of eating and people literally die sooner, and we know that from international research.”*



Isolation was seen as another risk factor for abuse. Being socially isolated was seen to contribute to the normalisation of abuse and restrict the ability of older individuals to seek support. This could be isolation as a result of living alone with reduced mobility or opportunities for social interaction or being isolated from others by an abuser. One participant spoke about the unique experiences of older individuals who took part in their research and how downsizing in later life can lead to social isolation.

*“There was so much commentary in the survey responses from people who said, ‘I used to hang out with other people when I was living in blah, blah, but since we moved, we don't know anyone here.’ That seems to have been a real issue for lots of people. I'd say there's some particular vulnerabilities around that.”*

Living alone, or with an abuser, can lead to older people becoming isolated from others. One initiative hypothesised that older people become trapped in abusive situations as the perpetrator is better able to conceal abuse and isolate the older person from potential help seeking avenues:

*“We know from publications both here in New Zealand but mainly in the US and the UK, that older people who are abused, very frequently are dependent on the people abusing them. When there is another person present in the interview and the interviewer has to ask you, ‘Are you frightened of someone in your family?’ you're dependent on them for food, for everything. You're not going to go ‘Well actually yes, my son is a bastard and I'm so frightened that he will push me around’.”*

### **Client Example: Social isolation and loneliness**

“Because he was so lonely, he would stand out the front of his apartment and he would talk to anyone that walked past and then over time people got to know who he was and he had a list of people that would come on pension day, get their smoke money, get their drink money, he got packed up and put in someone's car and taken to Auckland over the Christmas holidays and paid for the petrol. When you speak to him about it, he goes ‘That's my mate, that's my friend.’ It's actually not his friend. It's people abusing him and taking advantage of him. It's not abuse with a capital A. It's about degrees of protection and degrees of abuse. That's how vulnerable loneliness and isolation can make you.”

### **Poverty and housing**

Socio-economic conditions and poverty, at both an individual and an inter-generational level, were identified as key drivers of the abuse of older people. Organisations highlighted housing unaffordability as a significant financial stressor for older people, regardless of whether they rent or own their own home. This was seen to put older people in situations where they have to decide which basic needs they can afford to meet. Housing instability could also mean that older people rely on social housing options in their old age, which are often considered inappropriate to meet their needs.

*“The other thing that we really recognise is abject poverty in retirement, even if you're in the Kāinga Ora house let alone if you're paying private rent. Even if you*

*own your home outright but you're now in your 80s and you've only been on the pension and you've had not much savings, how do you do the maintenance repair on your house?"*

*"I would say living in social housing that is not necessarily set up well for older people. Social housing in large apartment blocks. What I think is appropriate social housing for older people would be sort of small groups of units together on the flat, maybe groups of five or six where people can actually get to know Joan and Henry and start to make little friends. Community housing providers are being set up instead of Councils. There's some really good iwi led initiatives with kaumātua housing but that's rare and we need so much more of that."*

Participants spoke about the perceived obligation amongst older people to continue supporting children in adulthood as an economic factor in abuse. These participants gave examples of adult children moving back in with their parents due to inaccessible housing options and causing stress for older people by *"taking over the home, doing drugs, bullying and terrorising"* parents. There were also examples of families who would view an older adult's pension or savings as a shared resource which could lead to financially abusive situations.

*"I think too it's often the case where if mum or dad, if either the children have moved into the family home or grandma or granddad have moved in with the kids, it's like well you're living here free of charge kind of thing so actually we deserve that money."*

*"That age group don't talk about money. It's not something you discuss, and it might start off with the person loses their job, so they move in for a little while and that little while gets longer and what money they do get on a benefit, well they need money to go and get a flat and a bond. There's this whole intergenerational expectation of 'well, you're my parent' but when does that stop?"*

A lack of control over their finances and assets amongst older people could facilitate ongoing abuse. One example of this was parents being forced to remain in their home rather than moving into supported living facilities because adult children are not allowing them to sell their home. Financial barriers associated with contesting or changing an EPOA decision and documentation could also allow an abusive situation to occur or continue to occur.

*"We had a case where dad had Alzheimer's, the son would not put him into care because he didn't want the house sold. He didn't want to lose his inheritance. His father was just left in this home. I think he might have caught the kitchen on fire. That's going to be a new trend, this whole idea of protecting inheritance."*

### **Limited capacity and heightened vulnerability**

Many of the participants spoke about the heightened vulnerability of older people as a risk factor for abuse. Some of these participants compared the level of older people's vulnerability to that of children. Children – like older people – are often dependent on their abuser, in some cases are unable to meet their own basic and safety needs, and may have reduced decision-making capacity to consent or understand complex situations.

*“People do their best to try and get their needs met and so that might mean asking a neighbour that they don't know very well to do something or handing Eftpos cards over to people. It's a subset of individuals that are really particularly vulnerable. It's not that they're all being abused but they're all so vulnerable that they're wide open for someone to take advantage of that level of vulnerability.”*

### **Hidden nature and normalisation of abuse**

Participants spoke about the hidden nature of the abuse of older people as a factor that makes it challenging to address.

*“Of the original interRAI assessment, maybe 2.5% on average would capture older adults as potentially being victims of abuse. If we accept that abuse rate is no different than Australia, the US, the UK etc., then we should be capturing at least 12.5 maybe 15% of the people as being abused and the interRAI is used with a more vulnerable population so it may be even higher rates.”*

Participants shared various reasons for abuse being difficult to detect and address. These include perpetrators being very good at covering up the abuse and the reluctance of older people to report abuse, particularly if the abuser is a close family member or if they are dependent on them.

*“People that are good at abusing their elders are also very good at covering it up. Rather than just relying on our skill or ability can be irrelevant. People are very good at coming in and everything looks to be kosher, but the reality is it's not.”*

*“We have quite a bit of that, particularly mothers and sons, that seems the big one. We offer suggestions of the 0800 number, someone just to talk through that and just to talk about it with someone and ‘No, no, no.’ There's a lot of people who are not doing anything about it but living in that and then there's all the ones that haven't said anything.”*

The normalisation or rationalisation of abuse by the older person may also lead to it being unreported by victims. One participant explained that abuse can be minimised or normalised when an older person values their relationship with their abuser over and above addressing the abuse. A number of participants also spoke about the impact of a lack of awareness, education, and conversations about the topic, with some older people simply having no idea they are in an abusive situation.

*“We would often have a whole lot of kaumātua come and go ‘Oh we don't get abused.’ By the end of it they're like, ‘Oh, gee, we are being abused.’ I mean we talked about scams and frauds, so keeping them safe online, like their phone secure, things like that, but also things like them recognising that they have mokos that will take \$10 out of their bag and not even ask them and they're like ‘We didn't actually think that that was abuse.’ They're starting to tick things over and then when you talk to the mokos, they themselves don't realise it. They were like ‘It's just something we always do. We need money, nannies got some money, we just take it’.”*

### Client Example: Older people unaware of abuse

“We had an older woman and her daughter moved in with her, supposedly to take care of her, and unbeknownst to this older person, her daughter was isolating her, stopping family and friends from visiting her and she went as far as putting trespass notices against the family. We have our older person there who had absolutely no idea, took her phone away, everything. We got this case because her concerned sister rang us to say she had not heard from her for several months and was really concerned and then the rest of the family contacted us to say they had these trespass orders. That's how it came to light, and I thought of course that older person would not have known any different.”

### Complexity of intent

The abuse of older people can be challenging to tackle, as it can stem from a wide range of complex and diverse motivations. Some initiatives have encountered instances where the abuser knowingly inflicted harm for financial or other types of gain, whereas others found many instances of abuse encountered were being perpetrated unknowingly. A lack of education or understanding and often toxic family dynamics create highly complex environments where abuse can be hard to address. Participants acknowledged intent differed from case to case, so approaches to potentially abusive situations require patience and care.

*“It was about building whānau capability to kind of create a safe environment for everyone living in that whare. How do we keep nanny safe because they didn't realise that because they took nanny's \$10, that was for her prescription. Because now nanny's not able to get her prescription she's going to become unwell. So, for them to sit there and go 'We don't want her to become unwell.' That really was around education, and it wasn't around the intent of wanting to hurt their kaumātua, but it was around just, this is normal for us.”*

*“It is manipulative, it is coercive control, it is intentional, and it's panic driven and it's panic stricken and it's patterns of behaviour that are decades old that are going on and on, if you think about it from a family systems point of view.”*

### Client Example: The complexity of intent

“We've just admitted a patient who has over the last few weeks become incontinent. He is suffering from dementia. Unfortunately, he also wanders at night, so his wife wakes up in the morning and the whole house is... she cleans up day after day. So, she started at night to lock his door from the outside, they sleep in separate bedrooms. Now, he's agitated, he wakes up, the door is locked, obviously he's not happy about it and he bangs and he shouts. So yes, formally she is abusing him. But, really, report her to the Police? That would be ridiculous. She was just trying to somehow keep herself from burning out and she really cares for him. She's been caring for him with his journey of dementia for so many years, but she doesn't know where to go, how to get help. We need these kinds of discussions or information out there for families and communities. Most people don't abuse their older parents because they take revenge on them. A lot of abuse, I believe, is just people are unaware that they're actually abusing.”

## Existing definitions and frameworks make AOP difficult to address

In addition to identifying learning for prevention programmes and services, participants also identified learnings for the sector. Participants highlighted a number of areas where they felt that the sector requires further development in order to support prevention efforts in AOP. These included:

- Lack of a clear definition of AOP can make it challenging to address.
- Unclear AOP reporting guidelines can make it difficult to address.
- Safeguarding legislation is needed to support prevention efforts.
- Professionalisation of the sector could be improved.
- Better information sharing, including research and networking, would support AOP prevention efforts.

## Lack of a clear definition of AOP can make it challenging to uncover and address

Several participants spoke about a lack of a clear definition for the abuse of older people. One participant referenced the UN definition “*Elder abuse is 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.*” which they described as “*so enormously broad as to be unhelpful*”. This participant felt that a lack of specificity in current definitions can make it difficult to demonstrate both to abusers and victims that they may be involved in an abusive situation. This was also seen to lead to semantic bleaching, a process where the significance of the term is weakened as members of the public begin to refer to instances that do not constitute abuse.

*“The definition is so broad, [...] there’s not much point, and we do get referrals, we will get elder abuse referrals, a lady rang up, “I was just at the supermarket, and I saw this woman getting out of a taxi and the taxi driver was yelling at her and I think that’s elder abuse.”*

*“Elder Abuse does fit into family violence but it’s not the same as ordinary family violence. It has unique components to it because of cognition, because of capacity, because coercive control is much more subtle and doesn’t meet any definition of a crime. It is its own space.”*

*“There’s no gold standard, there’s no way to measure abuse as an accurate this is definitely abuse this isn’t. It makes it, from my point of view it’s quite a difficult thing to then investigate and look at.”*

## Unclear AOP reporting guidelines can make it difficult to address

A lack of clarity around what to do when a member of the public suspects abuse was seen to be another gap in the sector. One participant explained that, regardless of the accuracy of detection tools, if there are not clear guidelines or requirements for flagging or reporting potential abuse, it will not impact overall outcomes for older people.

*“Unfortunately, there has not been a nationwide policy. When we had DHBs and the interRAI quality controller in each DHB sort of had their own policy. It will be unbelievably unusual for anyone to report to the Police.”*



*“Pediatricians are by law required to report suspicion of infant or child abuse. ED consultants must report suspicions of family violence and sexual abuse. Elder abuse is sort of an undetermined area, nobody really knows what the law actually means, how we should interpret that.”*

One participant spoke about the delicate nature of suspected abuse and subsequent investigations, explaining that while it is important to address abuse, accusations of abuse – whether accurate or not – can cause serious harm to families. This was seen to be reflected in some of the advice that government organisations provide in the context of AOP investigations, which was seen to err on the side of caution because *“they are more afraid that the family will complain rather than investigating what’s maybe happening.”*

*“There is a huge controversy where the abuse reporting to the authorities, in many countries the Police, should be mandatory. Screening comes with a lot of harm. It’s not as simple as that after the investigation. ‘Oh, sorry we were wrong. Thank you for spending some time talking to us. Bye.’ An apology doesn’t make it right. Screening is not without side effects.”*

*“Even when we ask for instructions, ‘we think someone has been abused, what next?’ Where I’m from there is something called constipated advice. When the legal departments don’t really know what to say so they sort of write something, ‘maybe you should approach this delicately in a family meeting with your social worker present’, because they are more afraid that the family will complain rather than investigating what’s maybe happening.”*

### **Safeguarding legislation is needed to support prevention efforts**

One participant spoke about the need for safeguarding legislation to support law enforcement agencies to respond in cases that do not fit neatly into the current definition of family violence, but are abusive situations for older people. Another participant spoke about the lack of legislative support to remove older adults from abusive situations in the same way that Oranga Tamariki would uplift an at-risk child, stating: *“It’s a shame we don’t have statutory powers to uplift them because I think if we did, we would.”* A lack of a centralised body like Oranga Tamariki where people could make reports of concern was also identified as a gap. Without safeguarding legislation in place, these services felt the primary tool they have at their disposal is negotiation and advocacy.

*“We need legislative support. You can’t intervene to stop elder abuse if you’ve got no backup. If it’s not a crime, male assaults female, Police really only know how to respond in a crime perspective. When it’s above the waterline family violence, they understand a little bit about coercive control, but they don’t necessarily understand coercive control when it’s other members of the family and not an intimate partner.”*

*“We desperately need some robust support around us otherwise it stays what it is now, which is a service that can only rest on whakawhanaungatanga and trying to bring people together by negotiation and advocacy but with no support underneath it. It’s a toothless tiger.”*

### Professionalisation of the sector could be improved

General professionalisation of the sector was seen to be an area for improvement. This included tailored training opportunities for those working in the sector, practice guidelines specific to the abuse of older people, and networking infrastructure.

*“Elder abuse is named in Te Aorerekura, the community response to family violence. Elder abuse is one of the priority populations in there, we've got practice standards, but those practice standards that are being developed are around lifespan, it's not around elder abuse, it's around intimate partner violence generally. We need slightly different things in other parts of family violence and there are parts of elder abuse that have nothing to do with family violence.”*

Participants also spoke about the need for research to support a more accurate understanding of the size and scale of AOP in New Zealand. Participants felt that there is a need for better statistics and monitoring data, beyond estimations that are based on what is happening in Australia. This work would require cross-sector monitoring or readily available data-sources.

*“This is a really difficult thing to research, and you need researchers who have got the money invested, who can go and actually quantify it because if you can quantify the size of the problem and then who's most at risk, that starts feeding into interventions and how to identify and how to pick that up. At the moment it feels like we can't even quantify the size of the problem.”*

### Better information sharing including research and networking would support AOP prevention efforts

Participants spoke about the need for better information sharing between organisations and within the sector more broadly. Formal research and publication of research findings was seen to be an important way of ensuring that knowledge and new learning is shared widely and utilised in practice.

*“If we can put our findings out there and people can have a read and a discussion and maybe pick it up and say, ‘They have a point’, we may be providing help to tens of thousands of older people around the world annually.”*

Several participants spoke to the importance of sharing information and learning across organisations to reduce the replication of work and ensure best practice is being shared and utilised across the sector. One participant explained this is something they would like to see happen when government contracts in AOP are re-tendered and a new contractor takes over. Sharing learning and knowledge in this context would mean providers can get up to speed faster and have the information they need to provide the best care for older people in their communities.

*“Everyone does have to share information. I'm big into that because that's where our biggest learnings are, and we replicate too many times with stuff that other people have done or learnt. You can just gather so much from listening to other people who are experts in their own field and gathered experience.”*

## Insights for working with Māori in the space of AOP

The EAPF learning and insights review has produced some specific insights into primary prevention of abuse for older people in Māori communities. These insights were limited to two specific initiatives which focused on Māori and were delivered by kaupapa Māori organisations.

### Working with Māori in AOP prevention requires a whānau-centred approach

Pivotal to working with Māori in the space of AOP was a whānau-centered, holistic approach. Central to this approach is ensuring whakapapa "is not severed" and whānau ties are strengthened and healed through addressing abuse. This whakapapa-based approach is at odds with Western practices, where older people are more likely to be removed from abusive situations and supported in isolation from the wider whānau. Taking a whānau-centered approach was seen to be "really critical around the safety of kaumātua."

*"It's not about removing the kaumātua actually from the whare because one of the things we were really clear about is that we cannot sever whakapapa, nor will we. Whakapapa is actually the strength that whānau have and so it's about us utilising that strength. Of course, if we thought that they would be in immediate danger, there would be a process we would undertake because it's always going to be about keeping them safe and the tamariki safe but in these situations, we knew it was more around how to do we work and engage with the whānau, what is the education that they needed."*

This provider shared insights into what is meant by a whānau-centred approach – which they cautioned is not the same as a family-centred approach. Whānau-centred approaches understand that individuals exist within the context of whānau, hapū, iwi and hāpori. Therefore, approaches may involve working with the individual, whānau, and the broader network around the older person. This can extend to whakapapa beyond parents, children, and other whānau members. Whānau-centred approaches provide whānau with the skills and knowledge and leverage their existing strengths to support joint decision making that benefits the entire whānau.

*"It's still a whānau-centred approach, which is not a family centred approach because whānau centred is wide. It can be whakapapa, whānau, and I think that's the thing that really gets, well, misunderstood I think at perhaps a government level anyway, is whānau is not, it doesn't just sit here."*

*"It was about how do we give those skills to the whānau, how do we map what skills they already have, because we know the aunties and the uncles that whānau are always going to go to the knowledge that they hold, the mātauranga but actually there are some key skills that they perhaps didn't have and how do we build that up within our whānau."*

Central to a whānau-centred approach is supporting families to frame ideas of collective living – which can include sharing resources and support – in a way that supports the safety of the entire whānau. While collective approaches can, on the surface, appear to mean sharing resources, they also require considering the impacts that taking resources from one member can have on the collective.

*"That's what we notice is that at the beginning, it was this is just part and parcel of Nanny or koro living there, because it's shared right. When we take a Te Ao*

*Māori perspective, we really are a collective, in terms of whānau, and actually what does that mean? Collectively we raise our babies, collectively we share resources. So, it was about being really clear that we understand what that collective living looks like, feels like, the benefits of it, so we don't ever want to come in with a non-Kaupapa Māori lens to go 'This is not okay, you cannot do this.' That's not going to work. How do we come in with that lens knowing we collectively live, mahi, raise our babies but, actually, we do it for the benefit of the entire whānau and if one whānau is not benefitting from it, then that's the key for us. It's like when everyone's benefitting, ka pai."*

### **Māori have distinct experiences of AOP that include cultural abuse**

One participant spoke about cultural abuse as a particular type of abuse experienced in the Māori communities they worked with, which was misunderstood and often overlooked within the sector. This abuse has two sides: abuse based on cultural norms and expectations from within the whānau, and discrimination-based abuse from systemic racism and perpetrated by institutions.

*"Our kaumātua are often seen as the ones who come in and just do karakia, can you please come in and do a waiata, a karanga and then we no longer need you. So, there's that abuse side that we see from within whānau or from a marae perspective and then there's the cultural abuse around when our kaumātua are entering into the bank, talking down to them."*

Cultural abuse was seen to be a particularly concerning and hidden form of abuse because of its intrinsic links with whakamā and tāpu. Traditionally, kaumātua are to be held in high regard within the whānau and when they are not this was seen to cause shame for kaumātua. This was not only because of the implications for themselves but also in the way that it reflects on the whānau as a whole. The desire to conceal this could also lead to abusive behaviours or situations remaining hidden.

*"The reasons why a lot of our kaumātua were not reaching out for help, shame is absolutely attached to it, that's one thing we knew but, within Māori, there is this status symbol that kaumātua have, and our kaumātuas said to us, that status symbol comes with a lot of responsibility, but it also comes with a huge amount of respect. If we don't get that from our own whānau, we don't want to admit that we don't hold the same mana in our whānau as what we know we should and perhaps it's what we get on the marae or from other people."*

### **More research is needed to understand how to best support those with Māori in AOP**

Underpinning the insights that these providers shared about working with older people and their whānau was the need for more research and understanding to support not only kaupapa Māori providers, but all providers working in the sector.

*"Actually, what I've seen so far is that there is no concept of what does that mean from a cultural perspective or for Māori and that we don't have people skilled in that knowledge, in that knowing. What we are seeing is that when you go in, the first immediate thing is we have to sever this relationship and we have to work*

*with just this older person. I think that there's a real big misstep there and a missed opportunity and that's not how we work, and we won't work that way."*

*"I think it's just, there are so many intricacies and dynamics around whānau that unless you whakapapa Māori or come from quite a strong Kaupapa Māori provider and have that oversight and that support, then actually it's something that you're going to be really challenged to do and, ultimately, it's our kaumātua that will be the ones that are missing out."*

## Conclusion

This review has gathered practice-based insights and information contributing to the broader knowledge base to enhance understanding of the scale, prevalence, and nature of the abuse of older people in New Zealand.

Initiative staff who participated in the fund reported several success factors for their initiatives, including:

- Gaining the involvement of older people in projects.
- Establishing and building trusting relationships with older people, often enabling subsequent disclosures of abuse and/or general help seeking.
- Clear communication regarding confidentiality, thoughtful service design and collaborative whānau-centred approaches.
- Having skilled, diverse networks to draw on and access to competent and well-resourced staff.

Challenges encountered in planning and implementation of new services included:

- Uncovering considerable demand in communities, with project leads feeling responsible to continue addressing these needs; often above and beyond what the funding could support.
- EAPF initiatives also revealed some gaps in organisations' networks, particularly regarding services.
- The nature of the abuse of older people itself contributes to this being a difficult space to work in; complex family dynamics and the hidden and stigmatised nature of abuse means the work is labour intensive and requires specific, specialist skills.

Participants shared the knowledge they gained about the abuse of older people and the broader sector challenges in addressing this issue in Aotearoa New Zealand. Several risk factors and drivers of abuse were identified, including social isolation and loneliness, poverty and housing insecurity/unaffordability, the limited capacity and heightened vulnerability of older people, the covert and hidden nature of abuse, and the complexity of perpetrator intent. Participants also identified systemic challenges that can make addressing the issue of AOP challenging, including broad definitions of abuse, limited reporting frameworks, and a lack of safeguarding legislation, as well as insufficient research, statistics, and information sharing in the sector.

In a relatively small study such as this where the experiences of organisations funded for tightly focused and time-bound activities, giving priority to particular issues is challenging. However, key reflections to take forward from the review include the following:

- Effective AOP initiatives are individualised, flexible, and are likely to be resource intensive.
- Ensuring best-practice and safe responses in instances of AOP disclosure require specialist skills and having a strong network of specialist organisations and practitioners.
- AOP prevention initiatives should consider and plan for the scale of need within communities and the responsibility that comes with starting work in these communities.
- AOP is a complex social problem and there are a variety of risk factors that can contribute to older people being in abusive situations. Systemic challenges can make addressing the issue of AOP challenging.
- AOP is a relatively understudied and hidden type of abuse, and more research is needed to understand the problem and the most effective ways to address it in Aotearoa New Zealand.



Significantly, participants in the review highlighted the value they gained from being able to initiate activity through the Elder Abuse Prevention Fund, and that their initiatives uncovered a substantial scale of need in this space. The initiatives developed through the Elder Abuse Prevention Fund have made an important contribution to older communities and a developing body of knowledge in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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## Appendix: Initiative summaries

Nine initiatives took part in this learning and insights review. This section briefly summarises the aims, intended outcomes and future work for each initiative.

- Initiative one: Elder abuse education workshops
- Initiative two: Uplifting takatāpui and rainbow elder voices: Tukua kia tū takitahi ngā whetū o te rangi
- Initiative three: Senior care advocacy support
- Initiative four: Enduring power of attorney support
- Initiative five: Kaumātua peer-support
- Initiative six: Home support community advocate
- Initiative seven: interRAI screening research
- Initiative eight: Technology-facilitated connection
- Initiative nine: Research with Chinese and Afghan communities

### Initiative one: Elder abuse education workshops

#### Family Focus: Rotorua based organisation working in family violence reduction

*A series of educational workshops and activities to promote awareness and knowledge about the abuse of older people and develop champions within the community.*

Initiative one delivered a series of educational sessions for older individuals which were followed by a recreational activity to reinforce learning. Sessions covered topics such as best practice EPOAs, safety planning for later life and financial mentoring, as well as guest facilitated talks with organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Age Concern, Work and Income New Zealand and Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.

Initiative one was developed by an organisation with a background in AOP and a pre-existing elder abuse team that work in responding to the abuse of older people. The initiative sought to support primary prevention and achieve the following outcomes:

- Educate older people about abuse and raise awareness of the issue.
- Ensure that there were people in the community (“champions”) who were informed and able to advocate for those who may be in abusive situations.
- Create opportunities for older people to develop their own support networks.

Initiative one felt that these outcomes were achieved and that both community and organisational champions were developed as a result of this work – although perhaps not as many as they had expected. Although the intention was to have older people attend every session, attendance was variable, despite transport to and from the workshops being provided for participants. Other challenges included coordinating and resourcing each unique session.

This work has elevated the abuse of older people as an area of concern and focus for the organisation and has supported staff to gain more knowledge and skills in this area. Future iterations of this initiative would involve testing the programme at different venues to improve accessibility, building on the idea of community champions and exploring further opportunities to connect in with local organisations to network and share knowledge.

## **Initiative two: Uplifting takatāpui and rainbow elder voices: Tukua kia tū takitahi ngā whetū o te rangi**

**Hohou te Rongo Kahukura: Building rainbow communities free of family, partner, and sexual violence**

*A research project exploring the experiences of takatāpui and rainbow elders, with a focus on sharing the findings through a series of short podcasts factsheets and community report.*

Initiative two looked to bring visibility to the experiences and stories of takatāpui and rainbow elders after finding that research in this area was limited. This research project explored the contexts of discrimination on the lives of these older individuals through a survey and a series of in-depth interviews. The survey, which was distributed and promoted widely across New Zealand, received 424 valid responses. The interviews were analysed thematically and edited into 15 short podcasts which looked to:

- Share and elevate the stories and experiences of takatāpui and rainbow elders.
- Explore the impacts of discrimination and the specific vulnerabilities for this group of older people in New Zealand.
- Support future service design that results in improved rainbow and takatāpui elder inclusion in older persons services and strategies in Aotearoa.

Initiative two was successful in recruiting and engaging a variety of takatāpui and rainbow elders, with eleven individuals interviewed from a variety of geographic areas, sexualities, living situations and disability status backgrounds. While the initiative was successful in engaging Māori and Pasifika participants to interview, no rainbow ethnic elders participated as interviewees. This was addressed with follow-up focus groups with rainbow ethnic groups, takatāpui, rainbow Pasifika groups, and this material incorporated into the final report.

Future work includes finalising and distributing the final podcasts and report findings, which are on the Hohou te Rongo Kahukura and Rainbow Hub Waikato websites, and shared on Pride NZ, an archive of rainbow audio clips. Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura will also integrate the findings into their internal training material. The follow-up project, also funded by the Office for Seniors, is a collaboration with Age Concern Auckland to develop a framework that drives inclusive practices and spaces for takatāpui and rainbow elders, including training to allow older persons services to become “Rainbow Ready”.

## **Initiative three: Senior care advocacy support**

**Manchester House: Operates a Senior Hub that offers older people in Fielding a place of belonging, purpose, and social connection**

*A Senior Care Advocate role established to raise awareness about the abuse of older people in communities alongside providing information, connection, and advocacy support to older people.*

Initiative three involved establishing a Senior Care Advocate role in an existing senior hub setting. The position was shared by two staff members who each dedicated eight hours a week to the role. The Senior Care Advocates provided one-on-one advocacy and support for older people with unmet

needs and acted as a conduit to specialist service agencies who provided assistance as required. The role looked to:

- Enhance existing Senior Hub services offerings by connecting older people to information and support.
- Advocate for older people to have their needs met.
- Support the existing Senior Hub to become better connected into the wider community of organisations working in the prevention and intervention of the abuse of older people.

While the role was intended to provide one-on-one support, the initiative found they had to create awareness through group conversations in order to channel older people into one-on-one services. The initiative also engaged older people via direct referrals received through agencies in their network. Initiative three saw value in the Senior Care Advocate role continuing and believed that it would be beneficial to have more hours dedicated to the position.

### **Initiative four: Enduring power of attorney support**

#### **Porirua Kapiti Community Law Centre: Providers of legal services to Porirua and Kāpiti communities.**

*A series of seminars providing AOP education and legal service advice to older people across the Wellington Region.*

The legal services organisation delivering initiative four had previous experience providing educational seminars within their community and recognised an opportunity to expand these to the wider Wellington region. Seminars were developed to include an in-depth focus on Enduring Power of Attorney services (EPOA) and the abuse of older people. The organisation had identified through their own experiences that well-drafted EPOA documents are an important tool in the prevention of the abuse of older people and conversely, that a poorly drafted EPOA can place an individual at a heightened risk of experiencing abuse.

Initiative four offered free information and advice, as well as assistance with the EPOA and Welfare Guardianship processes. The initiative aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Raise awareness of the abuse of older people.
- Emphasise the importance of having a well-drafted EPOA.
- Educate older people on best-practice EPOA selection and process.
- Generate applications for EPOA and Welfare Guardianship's in the community – free of charge - to older people.

Initiative four involved targeted and intensive work with communities with complex needs. Removing the cost barrier meant that anybody could access the service, regardless of means. However, the fact that the service was free also meant that families felt less urgency to respond to messages and organise meetings, adding an administrative burden and making the initiative more labour-intensive. This organisation felt that to scale an initiative of this nature would be of huge value to the Office for Seniors, as well as older communities and their whānau, however, development past proof of concept would ideally sit with government organisations such as the Public Trust.



## **Initiative Five: Kaumātua peer-support**

**Te Ahi Kaa: Deliver a range of services grounded in Kaupapa Māori including its values, philosophies and practices**

*A peer-support model delivering education and support for whānau experiencing kaumātua abuse, working in whānau-centred ways.*

Initiative five developed out of an observed increased risk of abuse situations for kaumātua (older people) after the COVID-19 lockdowns. The initiative involved raising awareness of the abuse of older people in a one-on-one and a community based setting, with a specific focus on financial abuse. Topics ranged from keeping safe online to engaging with whānau to increase understanding of kaumātua abuse and how to keep each other safe. Following awareness raising, Te Ahi Kaa experienced an increase of requests for support from kaumātua and their whānau. The initiative aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Raise awareness of abuse of older people, with a specific focus on financial abuse, in a one-on-one and a community based setting.
- Build whānau capability to create a safe environment for everyone living in the whare.
- Embrace the collective strength of the whānau to address instances of abuse.

Initiative five has now established a Kaumātua Governance Board and a Kaumātua Peer Support Rōpū to support with continued work in this space, with complex cases being channelled through to the organisation's social workers in partnership with the Kaumātua Peer Support Rōpū. They are also looking to collaborate with network organisations to combine external resources such as training, policies and databases with Initiative five's understanding of working with and engaging Māori.

## **Initiative six: Home support community advocate**

**Wesley Community Action: Works in communities throughout Wellington to help people who may be finding it tough to create better lives for themselves**

*Intensive one-on-one support to address the unmet needs of older people in the community.*

Initiative six recognised a need for intensive support for older people with unmet needs in the community. The organisation saw a gap between long term needs of older people which could require intensive support and what homecare support agencies are able to provide. The organisation has witnessed through their own work in this area that when the basic needs of older people are not met, they can put themselves in vulnerable situations in order to meet these needs (for example, providing online banking details to others in order to set up online banking). Addressing these needs as they arise was seen to be an important part of the prevention of abuse of older people.

Wesley Community Action hired a skilled and experienced support worker to work one-on-one with older people; this included activities such as decluttering homes, shopping for clothing and food, paying bills and supporting with home maintenance. The initiative looked to:

- Work one-on-one with older people to address their unmet needs.
- Prevent instances where older people may be vulnerable to abuse.

Activities undertaken supported older people who may have otherwise been vulnerable to abuse and also demonstrated the need to undertake activities that support older people who are vulnerable and require extra support, time, and patience.

### **Initiative seven: interRAI screening research**

**University of Otago: Department of psychological medicine**

*Analysis of 9 years of interRAI-HC data (186,713 individual assessments) to explore the impacts of altering the criteria for suspicion of abuse of older people.*

Initiative seven brought together clinical experience in acute inpatient psychogeriatric care and biostatistician expertise to review the way that the interRAI needs assessment tool screens for potential abuse of older people. The initiative recognised the interRAI as an opportunity to start learning about the abuse of older people in New Zealand as it is mandatory and consistently used in several environments and provides digitally available data for analysis. However, the tool has been shown by this group's research to be under-reporting potential cases of abuse.

Initiative seven manipulated the algorithm of the interRAI to become more sensitive to potential abuse, without changing the tool itself. The project looked to achieve the following outcomes:

- Use the interRAI database to learn more about the nature and scale of abuse of older people in New Zealand.
- Test the theory that manipulating the interRAI algorithm would result in a higher number of potential abuse cases being flagged.
- Lay the foundations for further research into the use of the interRAI to screen for the abuse of older people.

The new algorithm increased the flag rate for potential abuse from 2.5% to 5.9% which will have far-reaching, positive implications for a large number of older adults if further research supports this strategy. Future work in this space will look to publish the findings of this research initiative and further explore the relationship between interRAI and detection of elder abuse in communities. The next research initiative will analyse the fourteen indicators of potential abuse used in the interRAI and explore the frequency of these indicators being observed in communities.

### **Initiative eight: Technology-facilitated connection**

**Kilbirnie Lyall Bay Community Centre: Drop in centre for community members to pop in, share a cup of tea or coffee and have a chat**

*Facilitation of online conversations between older people and loved ones to reduce isolation and loneliness in older communities.*

Initiative eight involved establishing a bespoke room within an existing community centre to facilitate online conversations between older people and their loved ones. The converted storage room was a private space that could be booked out for this purpose, but also doubled as an area where members of the community could speak with centre staff confidentially about potentially abusive situations or experiences. Members of staff listened to them and let them know about the help available to them, including the Elder Abuse helpline. The space was fully booked out during the

funded period and proved to be very popular among older people who enjoyed being able to connect with friends and family who they were unable to see in person due to international distance and mobility issues. Ultimately, the initiative looked to:

- Address issues of isolation and loneliness by providing older people with ways that they could connect with loved ones.
- Provide a confidential and anonymous environment to have conversations about potentially abusive situations or experiences.

Initiative eight was pleased with the outcome of the initiative and felt that the organisation had gained valuable knowledge and insights into the nature and scale of the abuse of older people as a result of participating in the fund. The organisation will continue to maintain the resources to support the use of the room in future; however, without ongoing funding they will be unable to maintain the staffing levels needed to run it at the capacity provided during the funded period. To maintain or scale an initiative of this nature would require dedicated resource within an existing community hub with strong community ties and relationships.

### **Initiative nine: Research with Chinese and Afghan communities**

**Age Concern: Promote dignity, wellbeing, equity, and respect and provide expert information and support services in response to older people's needs**

*Research initiative exploring the unique experiences and needs of migrants and former refugees*

Initiative nine identified a gap in available data and the published literature regarding the experiences of older migrants and former refugees in relation to abuse and undertook research to address this. This included a series of focus groups and semi-structured interviews and incorporated the use of a validated tool to structure discussions. These involved members of the Chinese community and the Afghan community. Central to the success and safety of the programme was the use of a professional interpreting service to ensure that the translations accurately conveyed meaning and concepts. The initiative sought to:

- Explore the role and the place of elders in families across different cultural contexts.
- Explore the lived experience and the understanding of abuse of people who - through choice or not - are living in New Zealand.
- Use a valid tool to collect data on the experiences of older migrants in New Zealand and test the appropriateness of it for this purpose.

Initially, the initiative looked to engage a broader cross section of migrant and former refugee communities; however, resource constraints meant that the initiative scope changed to focus solely on the experiences of members of Chinese and of Afghan communities. Staff felt that the initiative went well and that members of the community were more aware of their organisation's work as a result of the research. Scaling this work would mean investing in further research to deepen the understanding of the experiences of these communities in relation to the abuse of older people.