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The Centre for Policy on Ageing commends the Comic Relief supported UK Study of Abuse and Neglect of Older People – Prevalence Survey

The Centre for Policy on Ageing commends the excellent prevalence survey of elder abuse and neglect published on 14 June 2007.¹ In particular the Centre supports the recommendation for 'better prevention with earlier intervention'.

Gillian Crosby, the Centre's director, commented. 'Now this survey confirms what has long been suspected that many older people in the UK are experiencing abuse or neglect with little support from authorities charged with protecting them. This must change and we welcome Ivan Lewis' commitment to reviewing current arrangements.'

'Combating the financial abuse of older people – the second commonest form of abuse after neglect – requires a coordinated effort not only from local authorities but also financial institutions and the legal profession who are well placed to spot and act on this form of abuse.'

'In a recent review² of financial abuse of older people compiled by the Centre on behalf of Help the Aged, we drew attention to actions that could help prevent this pernicious form of abuse. There is a need to raise awareness of financial abuse in all professional sectors, amongst older people themselves and the public generally. Independent advice, good quality information on money matters and financial education are central to developing preventative strategies. Training should be provided for professionals who have contact with older people - including nurses, doctors, bankers and solicitors - to help them identify and respond to financial abuse. At the front line, high street financial institutions should have written guidelines or policies for dealing with financial abuse. Legal interventions need to be more proactive, rather than intervention only taking place after the financial abuse has occurred.'

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'The US has developed several initiatives to help prevent financial abuse, such as the daily money management schemes that can reduce abuse by eliminating opportunities to abuse, blocking access to assets, or removing the motive to abuse. We must look creatively at ways of eliminating financial abuse of older people and take action now.'

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Notes

1. UK Study of Abuse and Neglect of Older People: Prevalence Survey Report, published on 14 June 2007. The survey was carried out over two years by independent researchers at National Centre for Social Research and Kings College London, and funded by Comic Relief as part of their programme to raise awareness of and combat elder abuse.
2. The Centre for Policy on Ageing was commissioned by Help the Aged to provide a literature review on the financial abuse of older people. The review was submitted to Help the Aged in April 2007.
3. A summary of the findings on financial abuse derived from the UK Prevalence Survey Report are available on CPA's website along with a briefing from Action on Elder Abuse on the full report http://www.cpa.org.uk/cpa/policies_on_ageing