

Social Work and Abuse of Older People

Bridget Penhale
Reader Emerita
University of East Anglia

Overview

- Historical perspectives and emergence as an issue
- Social work interest and involvement
- From margin to mainstream – the road to recognition
- What's in a Name?
- Policy decisions - Elder abuse or Adult Safeguarding?
- Practice implications
- Human Rights and Older People

Introduction and Background

- Historical aspects
- Global phenomenon
- Recent recognition, increasing concern
- Contextual matters
 - Demography
 - Medical and technological advances
 - Advocacy and rights
- Definitional issues

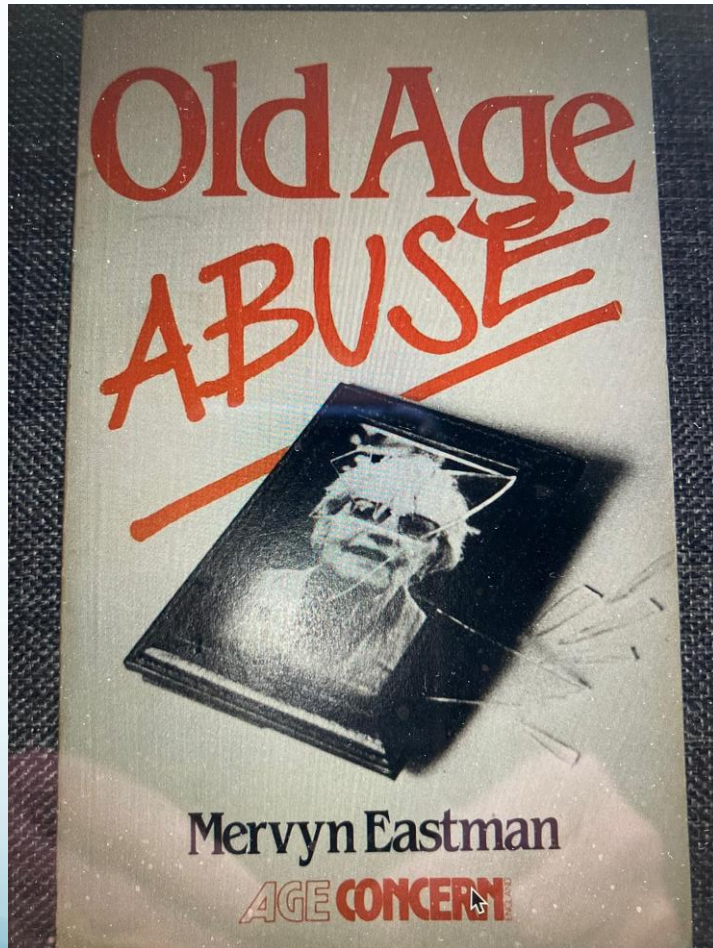
Introduction and Background

- Comparative lack of recognition – an under-developed concept
- A taboo topic – hidden from public gaze
- Primacy of the individual and personal
- Private issue or public concern
- Adult safeguarding - or distinct forms of abuse?
- Risk, vulnerability and protection – welfare model
- Importance of professional identification

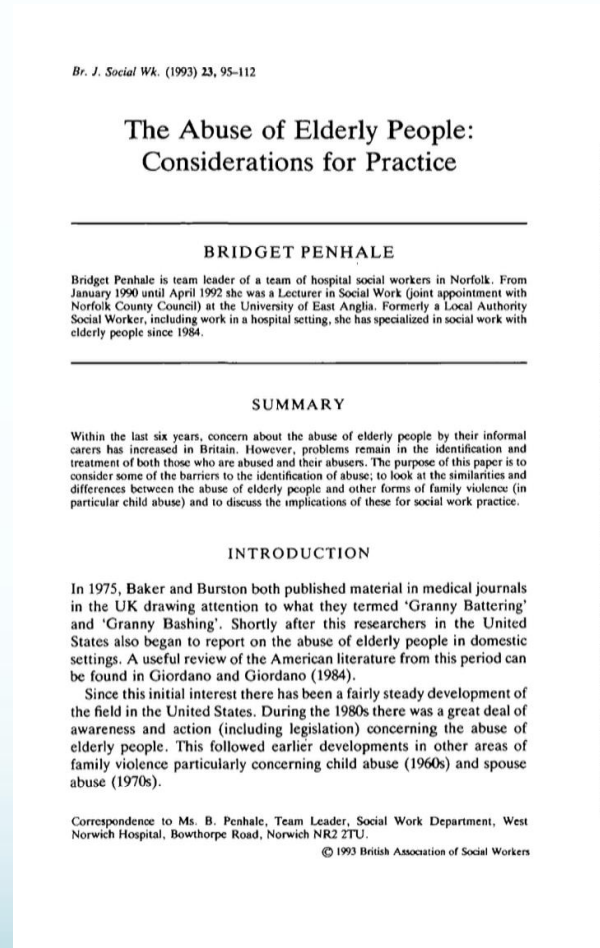
Historical Perspectives and Emergence as an Issue

- Identified early in the US – known in social work (1960s)
- Early medical recognition in UK publications
 - *Modern Geriatrics* (Baker-1975) and *BMJ* (Burston 1975)
- Age Concern attention from early 1980s
- Work to raise profile within social work (health professions slower)
- Academic interest established over time

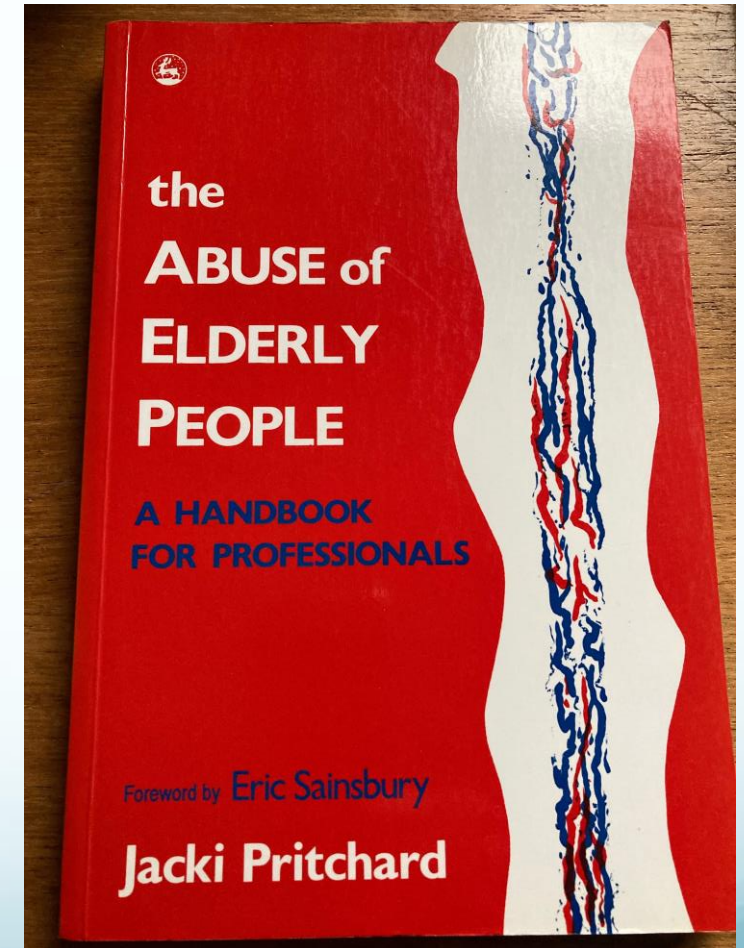
Early Social Work Publications



1984



1993



1994

Policy Decisions

- Work within Social Services Inspectorate
 - *No Longer Afraid: the safeguard of older people in domestic settings* (1993)
 - *It could never happen here!: prevention and treatment of sexual abuse of adults with learning disabilities in residential care* (ARC/NAPSAC, 1996); *There are no easy answers: the provision of continuing care and treatment to adults with learning disabilities who abuse others* (ARC/NAPSAC, 1997)
- Virginia Bottomley on Newsnight (June 1991)... 'I don't frankly think that abuse of the elderly is a major issue, thank goodness, in our society'
- Acknowledgement by Tim Yeo about abuse due to carer stress (Sept. 1992); John Bowis wrote foreword to 1993 SSI guidelines
- Early DoH working group convened 1997
- Decision to look at Adult Protection/Protection of Vulnerable Adults
- Lengthy process, slow progress - consultation period 1999
- *No Secrets: Guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse* (DH and HO 2000)

Policy Decisions

- Consultation process on Update/revised guidance commenced 2008
- Lengthy process – disagreement about issues
- Culmination and inclusion in Care Act, 2014 (Part 1- s.11 and Part 7; chapter 14 Care and support statutory guidance, 2016ff)
- Scotland: Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act, 2007
- Wales: Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act, 2014 – Part 7
- Early Regulatory changes from mid 1980s – Registered Homes Act, 1984; Care Standards Act, 2000; Care Homes Regulations, 2001;; Vulnerable Groups Act, 2006 - POVA List- Barring functions- CRB-ISA-DBS)

What's in a Name?

- Granny battering – Granny bashing
- Old age abuse
- Abuse of older people
- Elder abuse
- Inadequate Care
- Elder mistreatment/ Elder maltreatment
- Abuse of older people – Adult Safeguarding – Safeguarding Adults at risk

Implications for Practice

- Everybody's Business
- Need for partnership and collaboration
 - Working with individuals
 - Multi-agency working – extending range
- Making Safeguarding Personal - Care Act focus
- Role of Processes (policies, procedures, structures)
- Focus on when things go wrong
- Developing good practice - developing interventions

Current developments

- Importance of framing
 - Social problem
 - Public health problem
 - Human rights issue
- International attention – UN – WHO and HRC and INPEA (NGO)
- WHO campaign of abuse of older people
- Independent Expert Report on Violence against and abuse and neglect of older persons – (presented to HRC - Sept 2023); priority focus
- Human Rights Council Resolution - Violence, abuse and neglect (Oct 2023)
- Towards a UN Convention on Human Rights of Older Persons...

Contact Details

- Bridget Penhale
Reader Emerita in Mental Health of Older People
School of Health Sciences
University of East Anglia
Norwich, UK
- Email: B.Penhale@uea.ac.uk

References

- Baker, A.A. (1975) Granny Bashing, *Modern Geriatrics*, 5, 8, 20
- Burston, G.R. (1975) Letter: Granny Battering, *BMJ*, (6 Sept 1975) 592
- Eastman, M. (1984) *Old Age Abuse*, London: Age Concern
- Penhale, B. (1993) Abuse of Elderly People: considerations for practice, *British Journal of Social Work*, 23; 95 -11
- Pritchard, J. (1992) *The Abuse of Elderly People: a Handbook for Professionals*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publications