

Greedy son syndrome

Financial elder abuse is family violence. Senior Law suggests the contributing factor is ageism rather than gender (Domestic violence victims not just women). However, research shows that women over the age of 80 are most at risk of financial elder abuse, with adult sons being the most common perpetrators.

Some children assume that older women, particularly those who have not been the family's breadwinner, are unable to manage their own finances. After the father dies, they encourage their mother to appoint a financial power of attorney, often a son. In some cases, the mother is declared legally incapable.

Children with 'Early Inheritance Syndrome' feel a sense of entitlement to their mothers' assets. These impatient children will actively seek ways for their mothers to give them money. They claim: "Mum doesn't need money, and it's going to be mine anyway."

Some greedy children keep their eyes peeled on the Bank of Mum. They curtail her expenses, such as money she spends on holidays, carers and Kingston biscuits. They protect what they see as their entitlement.

The financial abuse of older women is on a continuum of violence towards women. It should be a criminal offence.

Sarah Russell, Northcote

Letter 5th June 2015