

## **Media release: UCD Communications**

Thursday 11 December, 2014

### **Launch of the Keep Control Campaign, Ashling Hotel, Dublin, 11 December 2014**

The National Centre for the Protection of Older People (NCPOP) at University College Dublin, in association with the Health Service Executive, will today launch the *Keep Control* Campaign at Dublin's Ashling Hotel. The *Keep Control* Campaign comprises an information resource pack and a dedicated website, which will help to empower older people to safeguard their finances and to protect themselves from financial exploitation. The resources include a *Keep Control* DVD, information booklet, budget planner, window sticker, flyer, door hanger, a Garda calling card and a poster. In addition, a dedicated website provides online access to these resources, as well as links to other online resources aimed at informing older people about how they can protect themselves from financial exploitation. The Campaign encourages older people to protect themselves from financial abuse by keeping control over their money and financial affairs. The resource pack provides information about five critical areas for financial self-protection: making a will; implementing enduring powers of attorney; opening joint accounts and authorising signatures; making decisions at critical life events; and protecting oneself on the doorstep.

Professor Andrew Deeks, President of UCD, will host the launch and Ms Kathleen Lynch TD, Minister of State with Responsibility for Disability, Older People, Equality and Mental Health, will officially launch the campaign. Minister Lynch praised the work of the Centre and the HSE in developing resources that older people can use to empower themselves and stressed the importance of self-empowerment of older citizens.

The Keep Control campaign was developed by the Older People's Empowerment Network (OPEN) under the leadership and guidance of Dr Deirdre O'Donnell and colleagues at UCD. The OPEN Group was established for the specific purpose of developing and designing the empowerment resources and is made up of individuals from a range of older people's advocacy groups in Ireland. The OPEN Group supports older people to be empowered against all forms of elder abuse, particularly elder financial abuse. OPEN emphasises the strengths, resources, rights and responsibilities of older people to safeguard their own well-being and happiness.

Speaking in advance of the campaign launch, Professor Gerard Fealy, Director of the National Centre for the Protection of Older People at UCD, said that the fact that older people themselves developed and designed the empowerment resources is consistent with the principle of empowerment and demonstrates the importance of involving the community in planning social and health care interventions that they themselves will use. Mr Paschal Moynihan, Specialist, Older Persons' Services in the HSE, said that older people are empowered when they take responsibility for their own protection by keeping control over their affairs and ensuring that their decisions, wishes and intentions for their finances are known and followed by people they trust.

If anyone has concerns about elder abuse, they can contact the HSE Information Line at 1850 24 1850. There is also information on the HSE website – [hse.ie](http://hse.ie) and the NCPop website at: [ncpop.ie](http://ncpop.ie)

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NOTES TO EDITORS

While the vast majority of older people live healthy and happy lives, some older people may be exploited, neglected, taken advantage of or abused. Elder abuse includes neglect, psychological, physical, sexual and financial abuse. Financial abuse is the most common type of elder abuse in Ireland and involves the unauthorised and improper use of funds, property or any resources of an older person. This may include theft, coercion, fraud, internet scams and misuse of power of attorney.

Elder Abuse is defined as: “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 or violates their human and civil rights”. In 2013, the HSE received over 2,400 referrals of elder abuse to its service. Since 2008, there has been a 29% increase in the number of referrals to the service. Most of the alleged victims referred to the elder abuse service were female and the referral rate was three times higher in the over 80s age group compared to those 65–79 years.

If you, or someone you know, is suffering abuse, don't be silent. Tell someone. Get support and stop the abuse. Anyone experiencing elder abuse can call the HSE Information Line on **1850 24 1850**, Monday to Saturday, 8am–8pm, or contact a health professional such as GP, public health nurse or social worker. For more information visit [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)