

THE PROJECT

The project aimed to develop a model by which ethnic communities could explore the issue of abuse within their own community. In order to achieve this we designed a piece of action research. An action research methodology allows researchers to undertake a project whilst at the same time developing the method by which to achieve their aims. In this instance the researchers were attempting to explore, with the Greek community, the issue of abuse of older people. While exploring this issue, we were also developing a model by which other communities might be facilitated in exploring the problem within their group. The approach we are presenting here is the model that remained when we sat back and looked at what worked in this instance.

SETTING UP THE PROJECT

Employing the Project Coordinator

We were very fortunate to employ as our Project Coordinator an experienced researcher and community worker, Denise Voros, who had already done some very fine work in this area.

Setting up the Steering Committee

We set up a steering committee comprised of representatives from various ethnic communities with experience and expertise in domestic violence services and services working with older people. We then devised, with the assistance of the steering committee, a series of interview and focus group questions. The steering committee met twice and provided valuable advice and feedback. The particular attributes and experience of the committee members meant they were well placed to alert us to the likely pitfalls or benefits to be gained from certain approaches or methods of data collection. (A list of members of the steering committee appears in Appendix 1).

DATA COLLECTION

Consultations with Older People

We believe it is crucial that older people be centrally involved in discussions about an issue that has such a major impact on them. They are the 'experts' in this context, and we need to listen carefully to what they have to say in defining, describing and discussing abuse. The input of older

people is essential in identifying how such a sensitive issue needs to be addressed. Two focus groups were run with 15 older people from the Greek community who were attending service clubs or social groups. The focus groups were run by the project coordinator and centred on set topic areas (see Appendix 2).

Interviews with Community 'Gatekeepers'

Interviews with gatekeepers are seen as very important for two reasons. Firstly, they are designed to explore the level of awareness of the issue of abuse of older people with people who are seen as in some way either spokespeople for the community, or as influential in the thinking of the community. Secondly, they are able to begin to raise the awareness of the issue with people who are seen to be important as 'gatekeepers' or 'agenda setters' in that community. Within the Greek community, priests were identified as important. Two priests from the Greek community were interviewed. We were interested in their views regarding the issue, what they understood as 'abuse' and what they would recommend as a culturally sensitive response. The question guide appears in Appendix 3.

Consultations with Community Workers

Individual interviews (four) and a focus group discussion were conducted with workers in the Greek community. The focus group consisted of eight professional workers. Through the interviews and the focus group we identified the aspects of abuse of older people that workers were aware of and concerned about. The interview guide appears in Appendices 4 and 5.

FEEDBACK PROCESS

Workshop with All Interested Parties

The data from all the interviews and focus groups described above was collated and presented at a community workshop. Workers from ethno-specific (mostly Greek) agencies across Sydney and steering committee members were invited to attend the workshop. This final step provided the opportunity for people concerned about abuse of older people within the community to come together to hear and learn from each other. It also provided an opportunity to engage the workers in establishing strategies which could begin to address the issue of abuse of older people within their community.

Draft Report of Findings

The penultimate stage of the project is the production of a detailed draft report initially to be distributed to our steering committee, and those who participated in the research, for comment and further input. This report consists of a detailed analysis of the data from the interviews and focus

groups and documents fully the outcome of the workshop where our participants suggested strategies and a range of ways to deal with this issue.

Final Report

The draft report was then amended and rewritten, taking the suggestions and feedback of those involved in the research into account, and this final report was produced. Through this report the results of the study are being disseminated to key members of the community. We trust that the report will assist in getting this issue onto the public agenda, and that it will be a useful resource in an area where few resources exist that deal specifically with abuse of older people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The Project Components

