

## **International Longevity Centre Global Alliance (ILC-GA) Position Statement on isolation and abuse of older persons during the COVID-19 pandemic**

The ILC Global Alliance (ILC-GA) membership is united in their concern for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals, families, and communities. During this crisis, people around the world have been forced to shield to protect themselves, their loved ones, and their communities. In many parts of the world older people have been told to shield or isolate, regardless of whether they have underlying health issues. Older people have been resilient and resourceful during this pandemic finding new ways to remain mentally and physically active. Many older people have embraced technology as a tool to combat loneliness and isolation. However, for others there remain significant barriers to digital communication, meaning the pandemic has resulted in a prolonged period of loneliness or isolation.

ILC-GA members have grave concerns about levels of domestic abuse during this pandemic. Domestic abuse against older people is too often a hidden crime that goes unreported. It is feared that during this period of isolation abuse of older people has increased. The ILC GA is presently amassing information to assess the seriousness of this situation.

As a global organisation focused on the self-determination and well-being of older persons, the GA's members:

- Condemn all forms of domestic abuse and violence against older people. The WHO estimates one in six people over the age of 60 suffer from some form of abuse, urgent action is needed to prevent this.
- Call on Governments to collect data on abuse of older people. At present many governments do not gather or keep this information.
- Seek greater legal protections for older people against abuse in all its forms, be it physical, sexual, financial, psychological or neglect.
- Challenge all forms of Ageism and discrimination against older people which is often the result of unconscious bias. The neglect of older people during this crisis has often been the result of this unconscious bias by policy makers and society more generally.
- There needs to be more funding and support for the care sector. People in Residential Care Homes throughout the world have suffered terribly during this pandemic recording high rates of infection and death.

Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have varied throughout the world, with some governments taking quicker and more decisive action to prevent the spread of the virus than others. This pandemic has highlighted issues of age discrimination, abuse, and neglect that for far too long have gone unaddressed. As the world comes out of this pandemic, the ILC GA believe there is a real opportunity to confront ageism and abuse of older people. Central to this is the principle that older people are adults, who have the same human rights as all other adults.