

PE2061/N: Require solicitors to ensure capacity of vulnerable individuals by having a medical professional co-sign legal documents

Hourglass (Safer Ageing) written submission, 5 June 2025

On behalf of Hourglass, the only UK-wide charity dedicated to ending the abuse and neglect of older people, I am writing to reiterate our firm support for the above petition and, therefore, for the introduction of a so-called **Willie's Law**.

The changes advocated by the petition represent an important starting point for discussion and a crucial step forward in addressing the specific and often invisible harms inflicted through economic and financial abuse – a form of coercive control that disproportionately affects older people. In our frontline work across Scotland and beyond, we continue to witness the devastating impact of such abuse: loss of autonomy, stolen life savings, manipulated wills, coerced loans and the routine exploitation of vulnerability within family dynamics and by nefarious individuals with links to the victims through professional relationships.

Last year Hourglass teamed up with YouGov to carry out polling across the four UK nations on attitudes toward the economic abuse of older people. Many of the prevailing attitudes we discovered are alarming and distressing:

- 26% of respondents did not believe that 'Taking items from an older relative's home without asking' is a form of abuse;
- 20% of respondents did not believe that 'Using a Power of Attorney over an older relative for personal financial gain' is a form of abuse;
- 27% of respondents did not believe that 'Family members trying to change the Wills of older relatives' is a form of abuse;
- 13% of respondents did not believe that "'Scamming" an older person out of money either online or over the phone' is a form of abuse

([Economic Abuse by Numbers](#), November 2024)

Economic abuse is too often ignored or misunderstood. Introducing legislative changes to recognise economic abuse as a distinct form of harm in its own right would give statutory backing to the experiences of countless victims and survivors and empower the justice system to respond appropriately.

Furthermore, we strongly believe that, should Willie's Law become a reality, it must be considered a cornerstone of a **national strategy on economic abuse**. The introduction and passage of such a law would not only provide legal clarity, but also send a powerful message – that Scotland will not tolerate the financial exploitation of older people and will act decisively to close the current gaps in protection.