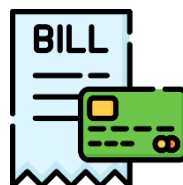


# Mental capacity and money in later life: research summary



It is very important to be able to manage money at all ages, including in later life. Many people in the UK struggle with money management and decision making. At older ages this might be made worse through illnesses such as dementia. This can make day-to-day life difficult. We also know that older people who might be struggling with money management can be financially abused.

In England and Wales, the law governing these issues is called the Mental Capacity Act 2005. It is not clear whether the Mental Capacity Act is useful in these situations.



## **We wanted to:**

- find out how people working in social care and social support manage these issues**
- hear from older people and their families**

We interviewed 28 professionals and 13 older people/family members in depth. We asked them how they identified issues, and what support is available. We also looked at information available to guide professionals and the public.



## **This is what we found:**

- **Professionals and the public were often confused and lacked knowledge about legal issues and procedures** regarding mental capacity and money management.
- **Professionals were not undertaking capacity assessments.** There is a lack of formal, detailed mental capacity assessment of specific aspects of money management. Judgments about someone's capacity to manage money tend to be made informally and through gut instinct. This is at odds with the intention of the Mental Capacity Act.
- **Roles and responsibilities around assessment and support are not clear.** Professionals often feel uncomfortable in raising the topic of money management with people, and are reluctant to provide support to older people.
- **There is a lack of training for professionals** in applying the Mental Capacity Act for financial decision making. In practice, care professionals often find it difficult to apply its principles and to provide support for people with their day-to-day money management.
- **Professionals often just send people to other sources of information,** such as a charity or a web-page. This is viewed as helping people to make decisions for themselves. However,

many people don't have the skills to manage money themselves and don't always know where to go for help. So it is not clear that this approach works.

- **Managing money is very personal and emotional.** This is true for the older person who may be experiencing difficulties and for people who are trying to provide support. The help available doesn't recognise this. It focuses on procedures such as how to set up Lasting Power of Attorney. It doesn't acknowledge the practical and emotional problems that can occur in implementing Powers of Attorney.



### **We think:**

There is a need for better training for professionals about mental capacity assessment in the context of managing money.

There is a need for clearer roles, responsibilities and approaches to supporting older people to manage their money. This might include independent advocacy.

The emotional side of money management needs to be recognised in order to improve assessment and support.

We need further research to understand whether the Mental Capacity Act is useful for decisions about money, and how best to support older people struggling with financial decisions in later life.