

**“We are Hourglass – the only  
UK-wide charity calling time on  
the harm, abuse  
and exploitation of older people.”**

**Safer Ageing. Stopping Abuse.**

# The unique challenges facing an ageing population affected by domestic abuse.

Richard Robinson, CEO

Veronica Gray, DCEO

# About Hourglass

- Founded in 1993, with a Helpline service since 1997, we have 30 years' experience and over that time our work has touched tens of thousands of people – on **average 8,000 calls a year and rising**.
- Our call volumes continue to increase and there are on average 40 'serious' cases of abuse reported weekly which Hourglass supports.
- Contracts with PCCs to fund IDVAs and Domestic Abuse workers for older people.
- We are working for a **safer ageing** society – where environments and procedures are in place so that older people are not put at risk of abuse or neglect.
- We have helped shape government policy and amplified the issue of abuse and safer ageing in the national press – most notably the age-specific elements of the recent Domestic Abuse Act in UK.
- We collaborate with key stakeholders and other frontline organisations to nurture our safer ageing agenda.
- We're urging a change in laws to ensure that the criminal justice system tries harder to support older people and make safer ageing possible for all.
- We undertake and commission research to provide valuable data and raise the profile of our cause through the local and national press.

# Hourglass Services

## National – Helpline + Online

### Helpline

- 24/7 telephone helpline service
- Instant messenger and text service
- Email
- Chatbot

### Website

- Policy and research
- Information and advice
- Regional and national updates

### Knowledge Bank

- Regional specific information
- Signposting
- Law and legislation
- Webinars
- Regional and national updates

## Local – Community Response

### Casework

- 1-1 support with a dedicated worker
- Advocacy and tailored advice
- Region specific expertise

### IDVA

- Independent domestic violence advocacy/advice
- Safety planning
- Risk assessment
- Client led support

### Safer Ageing Service

- Clients are matched with an Hourglass volunteer
- Training
- Awareness Raising
- Pop Up Clinic

# The abuse of older people

Older people are victims of the same types of abuse as victims of other ages. This includes financial/economic, physical, sexual or psychological abuse. Many others suffer abuse due to neglect.

**“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.”**



# UK Policy Changes

- New domestic abuse crimes have been successfully introduced - including forced marriage (2014) and coercive and controlling behaviour (2015)
- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a statutory definition of domestic abuse in UK law for the first time
- The Forced Marriage Unit was established in 2005 to protect victims coerced into marriage
- Office of the Public Guardian was established in 2007 to protect people from abuse of powers of attorney
- In health and social care, adult safeguarding guidance and multiagency safeguarding teams now exist.

# The challenges

- Domestic abuse and the abuse of older people are coinciding concepts which are often misunderstood.
- With an ageing population and already high prevalence rates, cases of abuse will continue to rise.
- Public awareness and professional understanding of all forms of abuse of older people needs to be improved.
- Particular focus and attention to the growing issue of financial abuse.
- Need to dismantle barriers to disclosure, and insufficiency of support.
- Domestic abuse is often a gendered crime, however 1 in 3 victims are male, and half of male victims do not disclose.
- The criminal justice system often deters older victims from seeking justice.
- There remains no specific law for abuse of older people and no reference to age-related vulnerability in financial laws.



# Growing Old in the UK Survey (2020) – Key findings

**1 in 5 (22%) people either had personal experience of abuse as an older person (aged 65+) or knew an older person who had been abused –**

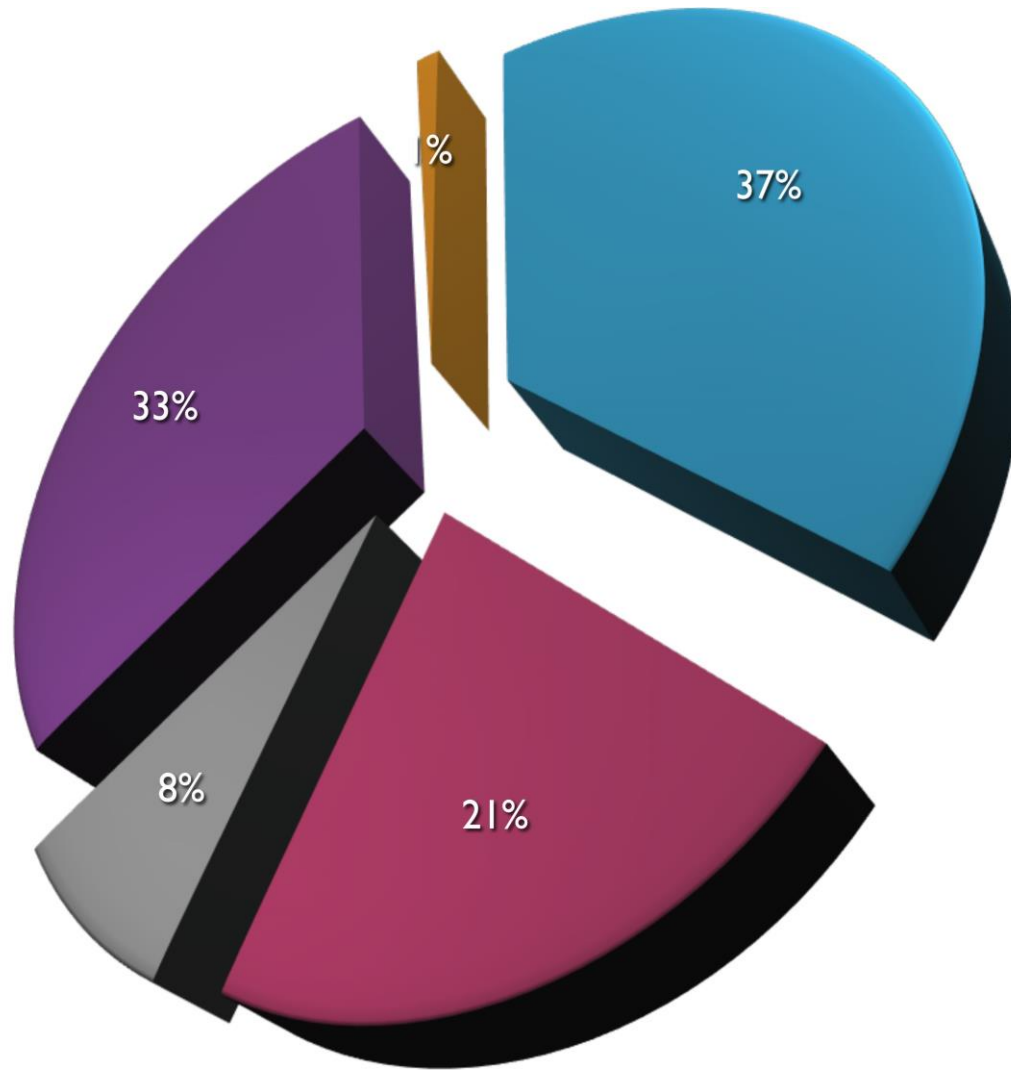
- This equates to almost 2.7 million victims thought to be affected across the UK
- 35% don't see 'domestic abuse or domestic violence directed towards an older person' as abuse
- 33% don't see 'verbal threats, mockery or intimidation' as abuse
- 30% don't see 'pushing, hitting or beating an older person' as abuse
- 35% don't see 'inappropriate or unwanted sexual comments or acts directed towards an older person' as abuse.

# 2021/22 Helpline and Online Services

**Our analysis of helpline and online services shows:**

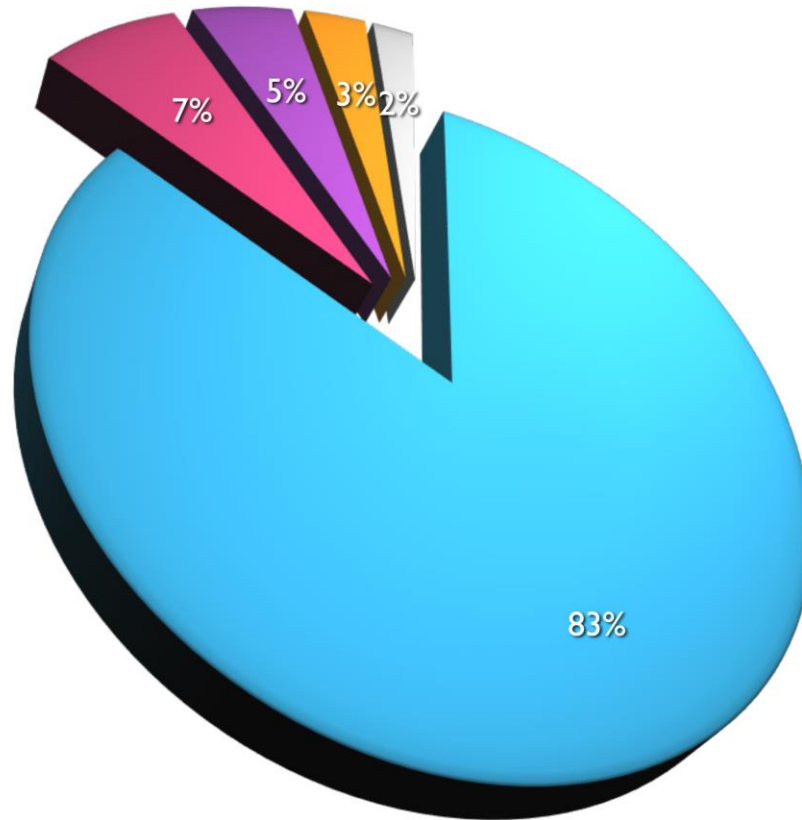
- The average of age of victims is 75
- The majority of victims are female
- Most victims are abused by a family member or close relative/friend
- 20% of helpline callers are the victims
- 80% of helpline callers are a concerned person
- Financial/economic abuse is the most common concern reported to the charity
- Hourglass is likely to provide support to over 26,000 people this year, up from 4,000 people in 2018.

# Types of abuse 2021/22



- Financial
- Neglect
- Physical
- Psychological
- Sexual

# Location of abuse 2021/22



● Own Home ● Care Home ● Hospital ● Sheltered Housing ● Nursing Home

# Sheila's story

- My name is Sheila. I'm 65 and this is my story.
- I met Jack just after I tragically lost a family member. At the time I didn't feel vulnerable but looking back I think I must have been.
- I felt outside of my comfort zone with Jack. On our first date I wrote down his number plate and address on a piece of paper and left it in my purse. I didn't think much of it at the time but I guess something in my gut was telling me I wasn't safe with him.
- I didn't want to rush into anything with Jack but he had a way of getting what he wanted. He asked me all about myself. My past relationships.... My marriage. He drove a flashy car and made an effort with his appearance. He made me feel important. Loved. Interesting. He felt like my knight in shining armour. The man I had been waiting for my whole life.
- Within two months he proposed to me and the ring was HUGE. We had talked about being together but the strange thing was when he got down on one knee and asked me - I felt emotionless. It was like my body closed down, switched off completely. I felt guilty for not being excited. Later on, I realised, it was my body trying to tell me that something wasn't right.
- Soon after Jack moved in with me. I had been doing some gardening and Jack suggested we have a bonfire. After the fire was lit and roaring away Jack asked me to go inside the house and gather up everything I had been bought by another man. Clothes, jewellery, cards...He said he wanted me to 'burn my past' because we had a future together.

# Continued...

- I can't pinpoint when it happened but things started to change. Jack would criticise me. He picked on me about my past and made me feel bad about decisions I'd made before we were together. I lost my confidence. I was struggling but Jack didn't allow my friends to give me a hug. He didn't like me seeing my friends at all so eventually it was just easier to stop going out altogether. He even started picking on my daughter so much so that she wouldn't visit. Jack would talk about my weight so I stopped eating. He controlled what I wore, who I spoke to, he didn't even like me going out to work. He tried to stop me from speaking to my son. He frequently told me I was stupid and that I was pathetic. He was in control of where we went and who we would see. He told me that in a relationship someone needs to be in control and if we had to make any big choices it would be his decision.
- I thought I could deal with it by myself but things were getting worse. I couldn't cope anymore. I reached to friends for help. My friends could see what was happening. I looked ill. I had lost a significant amount of weight. I didn't feel like myself. I felt trapped. He didn't even notice.
- I confided in my vicar about what was going on. He told me it was domestic abuse and that I should seek support. That's when I was put in touch with Hourglass. Hourglass made me realise that it was domestic abuse, I didn't feel alone anymore, I realised he was never going to change and that there were others in the same position as me.
- I didn't see it as domestic abuse. I thought he loved me and didn't see the control and how he had drawn me in. You think that you are alone but there are places to go and people to talk to, to help you. You feel so stupid and how could you let all this happen. But don't suffer in silence. Ask for help.



General risk factors for older people include:

- Reluctance to discuss family matters.
- Social isolation/loneliness.
- Dependency on others to manage care or finances.
- Disability.
- Lack of or fluctuating capacity.
- Recent loss/bereavement.
- Fear of or actual judgement.
- Self-isolation.
- Pressure cooker environment.



# Financial/Economic Abuse

**Financial/economic abuse is where someone in a position of trust interferes in an older person's ability to acquire, use, or maintain their finances. It can also cover coercive and controlling behavior, wherein access to jobs, transport and technology may be controlled. It is always a crime but not always prosecuted.**

A common sign of financial/economic abuse is the deliberate isolation of an older person from friends and family, resulting in the caregiver alone having total control.



# Is Financial Abuse a Police Matter?

- Sometimes (but not always) financial abuse will be recognised by the police as coercive or controlling behaviour, which is also a criminal offence. Financial abuse can take different forms and can happen to anyone of any age. Abusers can be partners, family members or others, such as carers.
- The Crown Prosecution Service has its own guidance for Crimes Against Older People (CAOP). Within the guidance it states that “if there is evidence that the victim was deliberately targeted for their vulnerability, this will make an offence more serious for sentencing purposes”. The CPS also suggests that it will invite the court to increase the sentence for offences against older people.
- The offence carries a maximum sentence of **10 years imprisonment** on indictment.

# Malcolm's Story

- My name is Malcolm. I'm 76 and I live in South-East England. This is my story.
- I've lived in this house for our entire marriage - twenty years - so many memories. She was the love of my life. I always treated her kids like they were my own. When she died I found it really...difficult. Nobody ever wants to lose their best friend.
- We were married so naturally I inherited it after she passed away. Danny - her son - he had always lived here with us. He'd never paid any rent or bills. I don't think she ever even asked him to. When you ask Danny about those sorts of things you can never be quite sure how he'll react. He's unpredictable.
- After she died, Danny got worse. It was like he knew nobody was watching anymore. I could tell he resented me - he thought he should have inherited the home. Danny would stop me from leaving the house - even if I had a doctor's appointment. He treated me like a child. If I wasn't home by a certain time he would lock me out the house. Whenever I returned home he'd question me - where have you been? Why have you been out for this long? Who have you spoken to?
- Danny set up a joint bank account for the two of us. He said it was because I was getting old and I couldn't be trusted to spend my own money. Danny would do the food shop but I always had to cook. Dinner had to be ready for 6pm on the dot on a weekday and 7pm on the weekend. When it wasn't he would start shouting. He would stand so close to me I could feel his spit landing on my face. I thought he was going to hurt me.

# Prevalence

## Financial abuse across all ages:

Nearly two out of five UK adults (39%) – **approximately 20m people** – have experienced economically abusive behaviour in a current or former trusting relationship, according to a 2020 report released by The Co-operative Bank and Refuge, the national domestic abuse charity.

## How this translates to older people:

Hourglass receives >15,000 calls per year. Over one third have a financial abuse element and it remains the most referenced form of abuse in our calls and enquiries.

# Attitudes to Financial Abuse

**94% of 45-70 year olds don't think financial service providers are doing enough to protect older people from financial abuse.**

Our research found:

- More than a quarter (27%) know or care for an older person who has been a target of an online scam to access their finances in the last year.
- Around 14% know or care for an older person who has been the victim of economic abuse by a person they should be able to trust.
- Around 8 in 10 people think older people are more vulnerable to economic abuse and scams because they don't have the skills and knowledge to manage their finances online and keep themselves safe.
- Almost 80% believe older people need to be more protected from financial abuse.

## Public attitudes to financial/economic abuse

- Nearly a third (32%) don't see 'taking precious items from an older relative's home without asking' as abuse
- Over a third (35%) don't see 'taking money from an older relative's bank account without asking' as abuse
- Over a third (34%) don't see 'family members trying to change the Wills of older relatives' as abuse
- 35% don't see 'using a power of attorney over an older relative for personal financial gain' as abuse
- Almost half (45%) didn't see 'selling an older persons house without permission to pay for their care' as abuse.

# Impact of financial/economic abuse

- Older people may also find it harder to recover financially from financial abuse because of the limited opportunities and time for investment and monetary growth compared to those aged younger.
- Non-financial related impacts can also result, and economic abuse can cause trauma, loss of self-esteem and confidence, familial breakup, mental health issues such as depression, PTSD, and anxiety, and in some cases the impact can even result in death.
- The experience of one form of financial crime or abuse alone can also lead to a consequential effect. It may leave an older victim disproportionately at risk of polyvictimization.



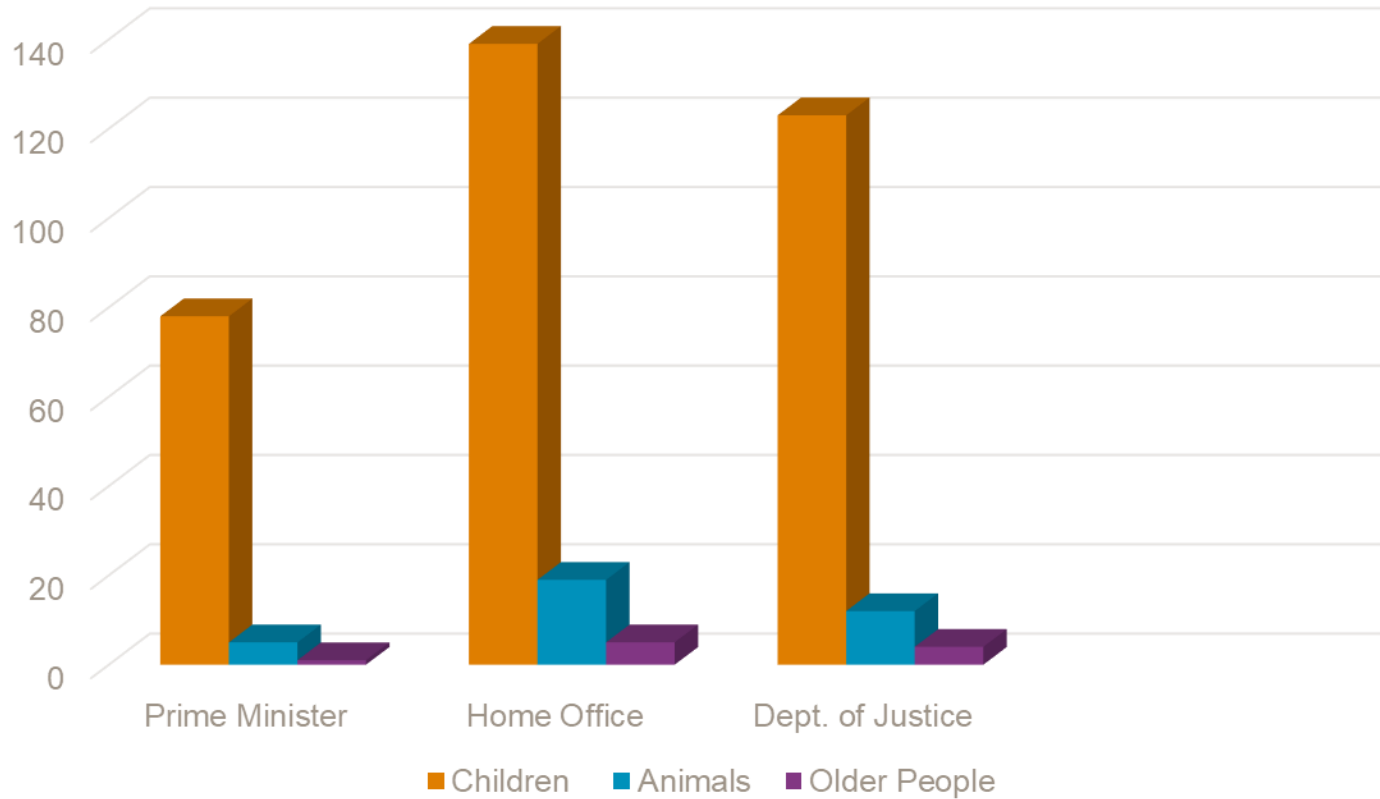
# LAST IN LINE

## Last in Line (2021) – Key findings

- Only 7% of the public think of older adults when they think of victims of abuse. 20% of people think of animals
- Over 500,000 references to ‘domestic abuse’, with 1,361 relating to older victims of domestic abuse (0.3%)
- **In 2021, the Home Office, its Secretary of State, key ministers and permanent secretary tweeted 109 times about “domestic abuse” but did not mention older people in association with the issue.**

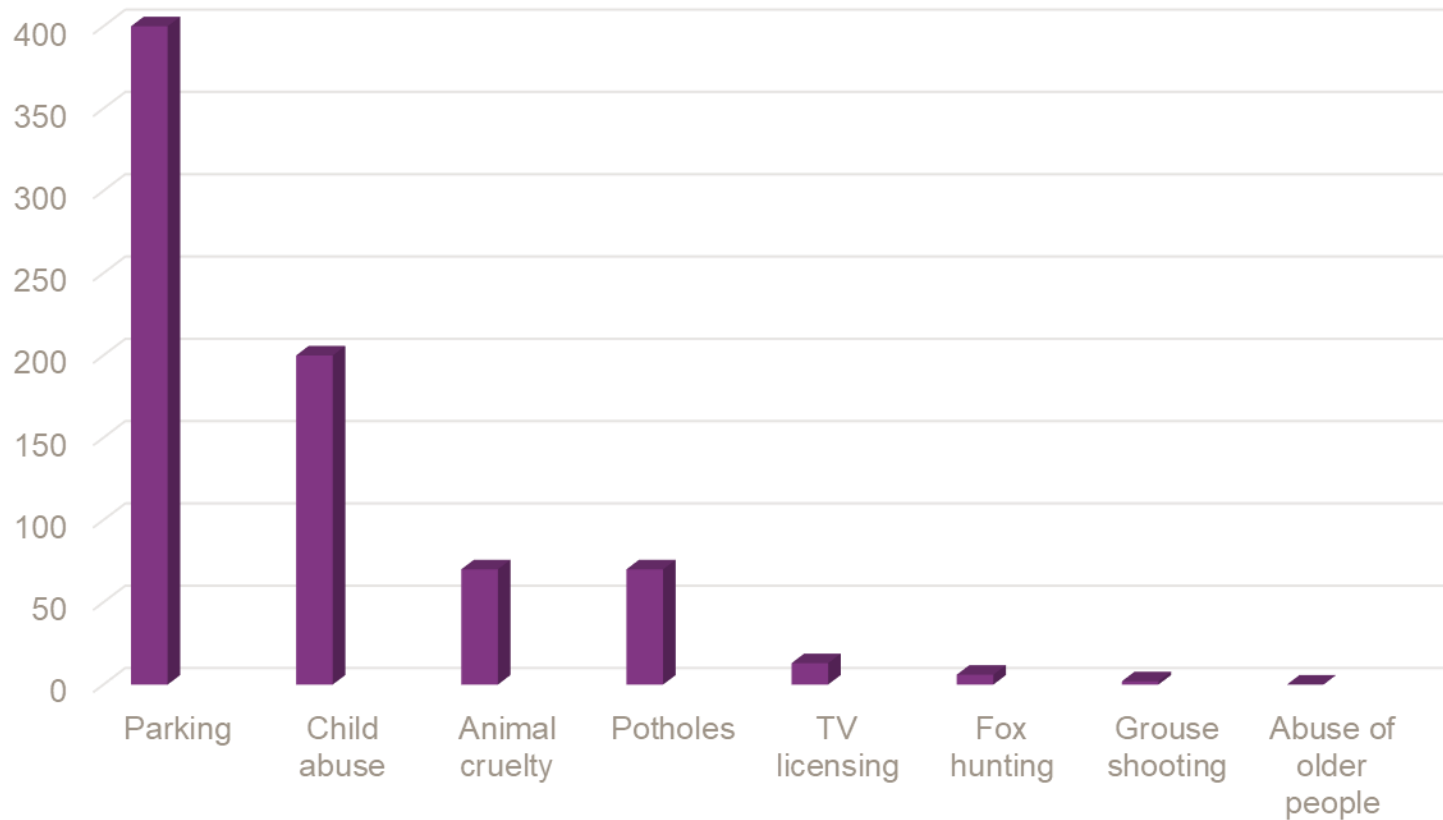


# Last in line for Government



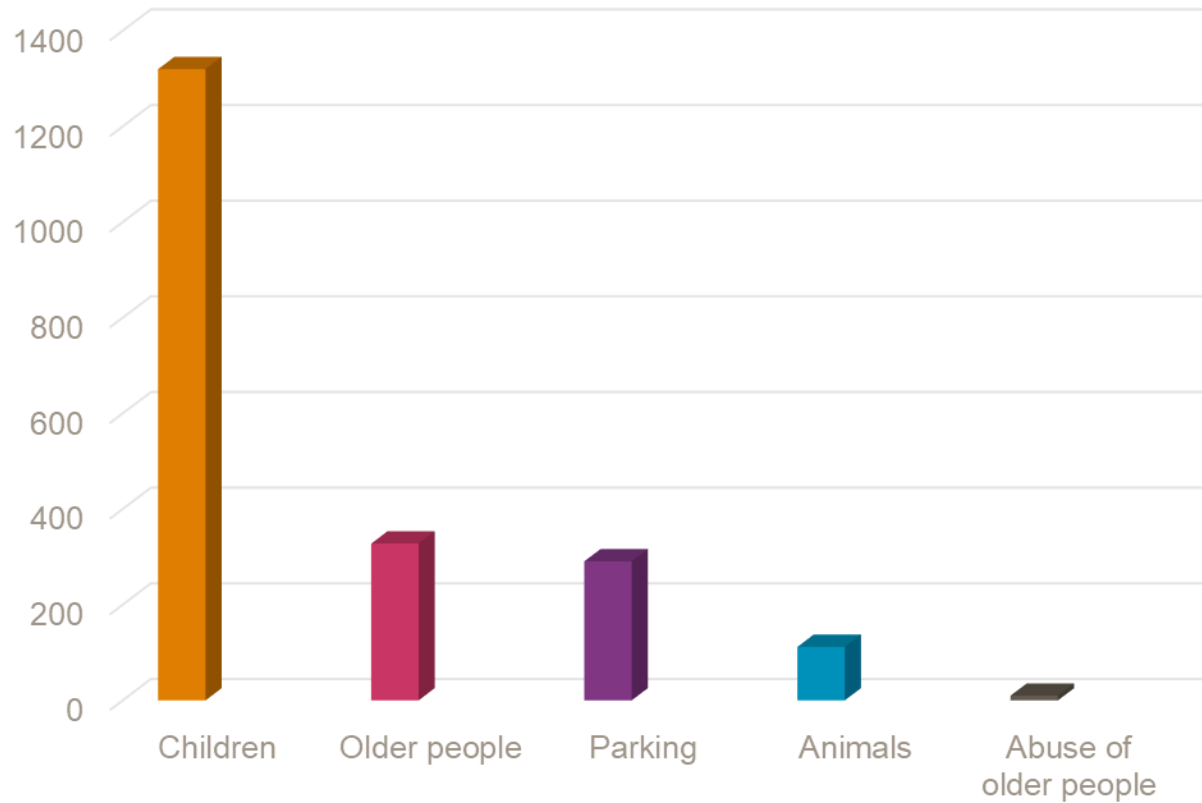
Source: Last in Line, Hourglass (2021)

# Last in line for House of Commons



Source: Last in Line, Hourglass (2021)

# Last in line for awareness



Source: Last in Line, Hourglass (2021)  
All UK constabulary verified main twitter accounts.

# The Way Forward?

- Awareness and understanding of the scale, nature and indicators of abuse of older people
- Increased visibility of older victims
- Change in law so that people who abuse, harm or exploit older people are dealt with more severely by the courts
- Increased responsibility and mandatory requirements on financial services providers to protect older customers
- Additional safeguards for LPAs
- Equity in funding for charities supporting older victims of abuse and ring-fenced funding for Violence Against Older People
- Cross sectoral working to promote a Safer Ageing Agenda.

**“I felt it was a family matter, I thought no-one wanted to hear about it and I found it hard to talk about. Hourglass were there for me.”**

**1 in 5 older people  
are abused in the  
UK every year.**



**Hourglass is the only charity in the UK dedicated to calling time on the harm and abuse of older people and we are here to help.**

## HOW TO GET IN TOUCH



Call our 24/7 helpline  
**0808 808 8141**



Text message our helpline  
**07860 052906**



Email us

**helpline@wearehourglass.org**



Talk to us live on our **INSTANT MESSENGER** at  
**www.wearehourglass.org**



Get information from our **CHATBOT** at  
**www.wearehourglass.org**



Get information from our **KNOWLEDGE BANK**  
**knowledgebank.wearehourglass.org**

Our Helpline is entirely confidential and free to call from a landline or mobile. The number will not appear on your phone bill. Our lines are open 24/7 – including weekends and bank holidays. Texts from outside the UK will be charged at their standard international rate which will differ depending on location and service charges of your phone provider. The number will appear on your bill and in your phone records but will not be identified as Hourglass

Hourglass is the working name of Hourglass (Safer Ageing), a charity registered in England and Wales (reg. no: 1140543), and also in Scotland (reg. no: SC046278). Hourglass (Safer Ageing) is registered as a company in England and Wales under number 07290092.



**Hourglass**  
Safer ageing · Stopping abuse

# Questions?

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