



Sexual abuse of older people

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Definitions of Abuse

- A violation of an individual's human or civil rights by any other person or persons - No Secrets
- A single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust that causes harm or distress to an older person - AEA
- Domestic violence is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are or have been in a relationship together, or between family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. - Home office



UK Study of Abuse and Neglect of Older People - 2007

The overall prevalence of abuse, defined by 'expectation of trust' in the year preceding the survey was

4%

This equates to **342,000** people aged 66 and over, or **1 in every 25** of the population aged 66 and over

- Leicester population: 330,574
- Cardiff population: 292,150
 - Belfast population: 276,459
 - Aberdeen population: 184,788



What is abuse? Key Points

- Abuse is a misuse of power.
- Abuse is about control.
- Many abusers groom their victims through isolation and dependency.
- People have choices about their behaviour.
- People are not inherently vulnerable.
- People are vulnerable to abuse due to particular situations and circumstances.
- People do not choose to be victims of abuse.
- People may not recognise they are a victim or want a particular intervention.
- Most abuse is a crime.

Sexual abuse

- defined as "direct or indirect involvement in sexual activity without consent".
- Being made to watch pornography against their will (or **consent – capacity?**)
- Being talked to or touched in a sexual way
- Being forced to have sexual intercourse with against their will.
- The attempt to carry out these behaviours



Sexual Abuse

Rape, Sexual assault, Indecent Exposure

Indicators:

- Withdrawal, choosing to be alone
- Explicit or untypical sexual language and behaviour
- Self inflicted injuries
- Poor sleep pattern
- Self neglect
- Torn, bloody, stained or missing under clothes
- Difficulty in sitting or walking
- 'Love' bites
- Bleeding, sore, torn rectal or genital area
- Presence of urinary tract infection, vaginal infections or sexually transmitted diseases that are not explained
- Women who do not have capacity to consent to sexual intercourse becoming pregnant



The horrible reality

- Women are more likely to be abused than men
- The older you are, the more likely you are to be abused
- The worse your health is, the more likely you are to be abused
- 9 out of ten older people being abuse are not accessing support services



UK Study of Abuse and Neglect of Older People - 2007

In 2004, there were 8,587,000 people aged 66 years and over in the UK. Extrapolating the prevalence percentages suggests:

- 105,000+ were facing neglect
- 86,500 were facing financial abuse
- 58,600+ were facing psychological abuse
- 62,400 were facing physical abuse
- **42,500 were facing sexual abuse**



What the researchers said

- Sexual abuse

“The only reports of sexual abuse had to do with being talked to in a sexual way that had made the person feel uncomfortable and being touched in a sexual way against their will. These reports are at the less serious end of abuse and are more properly classified as harassment”



Difficulties for older people disclosing sexual abuse

- Capacity issues – dementia, mental health problems
- Guilt, shame – generational thing?
- Family members
- Fear of repercussions – eviction, poorer care, “better the devil you know”
- Fear won’t be taken seriously
- Internalised ageism

The solution

- Resolution not prosecution?
- Specific and targeted training for police officers around vulnerability issues
- Better use of special measures
- Performance indicators
- Joint investigations
- Effective risk assessment – standardised tool?
- Early involvement of police and CPS
- Move away from assumption that vulnerable adults are not credible witnesses
- Social guardians
- Improved ways to report
- Modifying refuges to better suit older people

Safeguarding Adults legislation

- We have legislation to protect children
- We have legislation to protect animals
- We need legislation to protect Adults at risk

Framework legislation

- Safeguarding adults boards on a statutory footing
- Duty to cooperate and share information
- Data to inform policy planning
- Adequate funding

Good Practice

- Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Fully trained specialist officers with lead for Safeguarding issues (civilian posts?)
- More integration of MARAC/MAPPA systems into safeguarding
- Joint screening of alert
- Lancashire – PPU point of contact for all adult abuse referrals
 - Can PPUs manage added workload?



Can we say that there are any situations in which sexual abuse is not a crime? Is there any situation in which it is not an incident that involves sexual contact that is forced on somebody or, in terms of sexual harassment, is not contained within the Sexual Offences Act 2003?