

Dear Minister for Older People and Equalities,

Hourglass is the only national charity focused on the abuse of older people and championing safer ageing. We know that the abuse of older people – side-lined in decision-making for decades – is more prevalent in our communities than ever before. With risk of abuse acutely exacerbated by COVID-19 restrictions, the outlook for each of us ageing in Scotland is concerning.

We are writing to make you aware of the findings of our recent polling and to call on the Scottish Government to join our movement for safer ageing, launching with the first annual Safer Ageing Week on 30th November 2020.

We want you to lead the way in changing how older people are viewed and considered in national policy. Older people face both physical and attitudinal barriers that create circumstances of age-related vulnerability – an environment which puts older adults at risk. Our movement for safer ageing seeks to remove these barriers and to empower older people to age securely and live free from abuse.

In February we conducted a survey looking at experiences, attitudes and perceptions towards the abuse of older people, ‘Growing Old in the UK 2020’. The second round of the survey took place in June, to account for the changes brought on by the pandemic, ‘Growing Old Under Lockdown in the UK’. The outcome in Scotland found that as many as 225,000 people over the age of 65 have experienced abuse in older age – a startling figure.

The abuse of older people, to the detriment of victims and families, has not been given the consideration it needs. This must change.

Key findings from our polling:

- 1 in 5 (23 percent) of Scots don’t believe that ‘inappropriate sexual acts directed at older people’ count as abuse;
- More than a fifth (26 percent) don’t view ‘pushing, hitting, or beating an older person’ as abuse;
- A third (31 percent) don’t see ‘taking precious items from an older relative’s home without asking’ as abuse;
- Half (50 percent) of those surveyed in Scotland believe that the abuse and neglect of older people increased as a result of the lockdown.

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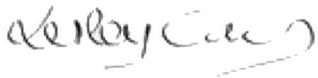
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The experiences of older people must be represented at the top of Government to close this gap – you can make this difference.

We call on the Scottish Government to commit to a safer ageing approach and for yourself to work cross-department to ensure that the views of older people are represented at key meetings. Of urgent importance in Scotland is the implementation of a statutory aggravation on the grounds of vulnerability and exploitation, recommended by Lord Bracadale's 2018 report. This is vital to the safety of our older community and for upholding equal access to justice in Scotland. The recommendation needs to be advanced as a matter of urgency.

Older people's voices need to be heard, now more than ever. At Hourglass we represent those people and their experiences. Our initiative for Safer Ageing Week, starting on the 30th of November, with your support, will galvanise awareness of the abuse of older people; inform the public of the signs and manifestations of abuse; and trigger a turning point in the national agenda – putting safer ageing at the heart of decision making.

Yours sincerely,



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