



Learning from Sussex:

why we need specialist local support
for older victim-survivors.

Call our FREE 24/7 Helpline

0808 808 8141

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Hourglass (Safer Ageing) is the only UK-wide charity supporting older victim-survivors of abuse. Two years ago, Hourglass partnered with the Sussex PCC to ensure that specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) were employed in that community to support and protect older people. This partnership has been a success, and we believe is a case study for how older people should be supported in all other communities.

OUR CASE WORK:

- Of reported cases to Hourglass, 40% of older victims are male, 60% female.
- 83% of reported abuse happens in the older persons own home, 7% in care homes and 5% in hospital.
- Most perpetrators of abuse are family members or close associates of the older victim.
- Figures from the Hourglass helpline show that in 2022, £19 million was reported stolen from older people in abuse cases. In 2020 this figure was just over £7 million. These figures do not include property theft from older victims.
- 32% of callers to the Hourglass helpline are the victims, 68% are from a concerned person

THE VICTIMS AND PRISONERS BILL

The Government's Victims and Prisoners Bill is currently going through parliament. Hourglass, along with other abuse organisations argue that provisions in this Bill need strengthening to provide stronger support for victims.

Hourglass supports the following amendment to the Bill put forward by Sarah Champion MP which calls for an assessment of specialist support services:

“Assessment of numbers of independent domestic violence and sexual violence advisors, stalking advocates and specialist support services

Within six months of the passing of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Secretary of State must-

- make an assessment of the adequacy of the number of independent domestic violence and sexual violence advisors, stalking advocates, and specialist support services in each region of England and Wales, having regard to the population in each region, and
- publish that assessment.”

Hourglass support the call for the government to conduct this assessment and believe PCCs, Local Authorities, NHS Trusts and other public entities should be encouraged to commission specialist support services for older people.

WHY OLDER PEOPLE NEED SPECIALIST IDVA'S AND ISVA'S

- Generic domestic abuse services are often not appropriate for older victim-survivors of abuse and neglect.
- In areas where local PCC's have commissioned generic IDVA and ISVA services, their case work is often then referred to Hourglass to provide the specialism as a backbone service. Hourglass receives no additional funding or support to deliver this often-complex case work.
- The types of challenges that older victim-survivors present with include digital exclusion, dementia and increased vulnerability due to disability.
- Often the perpetrator is a close family member. In cases where the abuse has been committed by the victim's child or grandchild, they are reluctant to report or feel that it is a reflection on them as parents/grandparents.
- Older people often do not want to take up the time of other abuse services, which they deem to be there for younger women escaping domestic violence. While the abuse of older people is just as harrowing, the victims often do not see themselves in that way.

The Sussex case study

In Sussex, the Police & Crime Commissioner in 2021 commissioned three Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA's) who uniquely specialise in working with people over 60. This was the first such initiative from a local PCC and has since been replicated by a handful of other PCCs, but not enough.

In terms of results in the last reporting quarter, the Sussex PCC data show that there were 126 valid referrals to the specialist IDVA's in that area. Of these, 92 referrals came from the Police, 4 from local authorities, 2 were self-referrals and 14 came from "other" which includes referrals from generalist domestic abuse services.

ANONYMOUS CASE STUDIES FROM THE SUSSEX PCC SPECIALIST IDVA'S

CASE STUDY ONE:

76-year-old male victim, male stepson perpetrator.

The 76yr old male victim lived in an owned property with his wife and stepson. The wife passed away leaving the property to her husband. The stepson remained residing in the property living in his bedroom. The abuse became apparent after the mother/wife passed away. The stepson acted resentful towards the victim for owning the property he believed was rightfully his.

Isolation and coercive control were used to stop the victim from leaving the house to see friends. The stepson began timing the victim when they left the property, on return he would question where he had been, why it had taken so long and who he had spoken to on route. The stepson set up a joint bank account with both parties' details so he could have better control over the finances. The stepson did majority of the shopping but expected the victim to have it cooked and ready at a time that suited him. If this was not done in a timely manner the victim would be exposed to verbal and psychological abuse.

When the victim came to Hourglass, they did not know the different options available to them. They were fearful of asking the stepson to leave as they had done in the past; this had caused an incident

where the victim was afraid of being physically hurt. We worked with the client to offer safety planning advice and support them to obtain an injunction to remove the (stepson) from the property. Supporting them through the court process and providing after care. We then liaised with other services to find suitable housing accommodation for the victim, we helped them arrange to move their items and ensured their details remained confidential.

We noticed a significant increase in all areas of support throughout this case. Outlined by our distance travelled tool, where we look at different areas of growth and confidence building. We found an overall growth from an average of 3 out of 5 to, 5 out of 5 in all areas.

Feedback:

"Thank you so much for all you have done to get me here today – I honestly can't thank you enough for everything you've done for me."

"I love it, I now have some new friends and I enjoy going down to the community room for coffee in the afternoon".

ANONYMOUS CASE STUDIES FROM THE SUSSEX PCC SPECIALIST IDVA'S

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CASE STUDY TWO:

Arabella fenced in – Locked inside the bird cage 'Isolated Prison'.

The illusory prison walls. Living with a coercive potentially violent narcissist.

A reign in, fear, panic attacks, impending doom and life out of my personal control. I have no reigns. My reality is lost, there are no dreams left only the focused thought of an escape route. I am awaiting an open door out of the locked 'birdcage'.

I am without a body frame. I have become a thread person suspended in survival and avoiding conflict until the next day and the next day dawns. How did I survive? How do I survive?

Where to begin to delve into 26 years of being systematically placed into an 'I' that I don't recognise. Staring at the white walls entering the monologue. No where to go and hide.

Living without self-worth. Pacing in fear of potential physical onslaught/attack. Yes, the swords are still here. You are six foot three. I am five foot one.

He doesn't even have a clue what impact he has on my whole being. Oh, Ignorance.

"That would have been helpful if you had died"

"The Bank" – Is my nick name

"Is that why you woke up so early – did you wet the bed"

"Who would serve you in the bank – You look so

Jewish – look in the mirror – those prem eyes of yours"

Some comments to taunt me. Peck at the sparrow who is unable to retaliate.

My rescuer did come into my life, my 'Soul Sister' who helped me deal with my seeming unmeasurable problems. Yes, I am indebted to Elizabeth for saving me by reaching out to me on the phone. A lifeline of hope. A trauma guide. Out of the darkness and utter despair.

Her voice gently shifted me into another space of other possibilities of how to survive. A structure of the time decoded for me.

Retelling Elizabeth, my months of D.A and gut-wrenching fear. Yes, I wait in earnest for those phone calls with you. I treasure them. I can then break the stress beads around my neck holding my breath whilst another panic attack ensues.

Yes, I can thank you in countless ways for coming into my life and believing my tale. For your immeasurable patience and consciousness in guiding and helping me step by step. Furthermore, supporting those deep scored fears. Yes, you have all those skills in abundance. Your due consideration is always alert, and your perception is always appreciated.

I will always remember our conversations – And meeting you too. All good blessing to your counselling trauma intervention and at your valued work with Hourglass. Thank you for saving me from myself and taking me towards 'A Road To Freedom'.

You probably understand me better than anyone else. Bearing witness to my crisis state for so long – My

high anxiety state – (Monologues) Thank you, for being the calming voice of reason over the phone and giving me continuous threads of hope.

Yours Sincerely

Arabella Fenced In

“Breath in Courage, Breath out fear”

Who are you rescuing today Elizabeth – In your dedicated role with Hourglass?

“It’s a great Honour” Said Fedyor. “To save a life, you have saved many.”

ANONYMOUS CASE STUDIES FROM THE SUSSEX PCC SPECIALIST IDVA'S

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CASE STUDY THREE:

Examples of Abuse reported to the Sussex IDVA's

Taking advantage of short-term memory difficulties

Using grandchildren as 'bargaining tools'

Misusing LPA to purchase holidays or a new car

Attending personal appointments with you without your consent

Not allowing you to use your own bank card

Stopping family from visiting or contacting you

Threatening to put you into a care home

Preventing you from accessing care

Telling others you have dementia with the intent to embarrass or humiliate you

Moving walking aids of out reach

Pressuring you to change your Will

Touching you without your consent

Withholding medication or overmedicating

There are many signs of abuse, both physical and behavioural, which are all too often overlooked, ignored or explained away. According to Hourglass research 85% of people in the UK believe the abuse of older people is a problem today, but less than 4 in 10 people feel confident they could spot the signs of abuse and 60% weren't sure they would know what to do even if they did spot the signs. The following

examples warrant a call to Hourglass for further information, guidance and support:

- Isolating from family and friends: Telling family the victim is asleep when they visit. Or not allowing family or professionals into their home to hide the possible occurring abuse.
- Monitoring communications: Blocking numbers on phones, removing batteries from mobiles (old phones), attending appointments with them, speaking on their behalf and misuse of Power Of Attorney (POA). Many services will accept an individual is POA without looking at the paperwork. They may have even convinced the victim they have applied or are in receipt of POA.
- Controlling finances: Stopping paper bank statements, attending the bank on behalf of a victim or with the victim to monitor withdrawals. Many banks have closed their branches, making accessibility for older people at times impossible. Signposting to post office branches near the client is vital.
- Controlling movement: Effecting an individual's day to day life, their access to support and care needs and their social life.
- Making threats, humiliating and dehumanising: Grandchildren are often used as a threat to older people. Mental capacity, old age and vulnerability are weaponised. This can be extremely detrimental to an

individual who may already have some underlying concerns about their capacity and is now being told they are doing things they are likely not for example leaving the cooker on, front door open etc.

- Deprivation of basic needs: All of the above examples illustrate how an abuser deprives an older person of their basic needs and rights. This can include economic abuse, physical abuse and coercive control.

Conclusion

The impact of specialist support services at a local level is profound. The evidence from Sussex is that these local IDVAs are a crucial lifeline for older victim-survivors. Hourglass urges the Government, through legislation and subsequent guidance, to encourage the commissioning of specialist support services for older people. Police & Crime Commissioners must look to what has been achieved in Sussex and be more ambitious and proactive in the support they provide older people in their communities.

The Victims and Prisoners Bill, if strengthened, has the potential to be a useful vehicle to advance specialist services for older victims in England and Wales. Ultimately legislation alone is not enough. We need those who commission abuse services to remember older people and understand the barriers they face when using generic services.



Hourglass

Safer ageing · Stopping abuse

You can contact us in many ways:

24/7 Helpline: 0808 808 8141

Our helpline is entirely confidential and free to call from a landline or mobile, and the number will not appear on your phone bill.

Text message: 07860 052906

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.

INSTANT MESSAGING service: www.wearehourglass.org

Get information from our CHATBOT - www.wearehourglass.org

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

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