
THE SAFER AGEING INDEX PART 1

LAST IN LINE

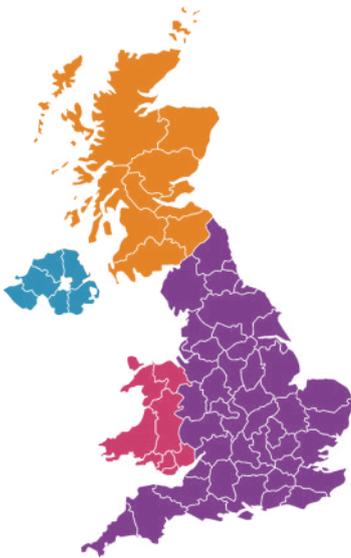
THE LACK OF PROFILE AND COMMITMENT ON
THE ABUSE OF OLDER PEOPLE

Helpline: 0808 808 8141
www.wearehourglass.org

SAFER
AGEING

The Safer Ageing Index

Part 1: Last in line: the lack of profile and commitment on the abuse of older people. Research December 2021



Putting an end to the abuse of older people coming last in line

After a year and a half of living through lockdowns, being isolated from families, friends and loved ones, being confined to homes, stark new findings from Hourglass show that older people, at heightened risk from the virus, social isolation and neglect, have been deprioritised by government and beyond.

New research from the charity has identified that animal welfare, grouse shooting and even issues such as parking have been given more attention over the past year than abuse of older people. Everyone deserves to be safer in older age. But the abuse and neglect of older people is sadly falling last in line, barely visible as an issue in terms of profile, debate and action in government and the public.

Shockingly there currently isn't a single source of statutory funding with ring-fenced resources to tackle the abuse of older people. Hourglass noted no funding has been allocated to this issue specifically since 2016.

This paper looks at the current levels of discourse around the abuse of older people within government and our political systems and the general public, and the level of public commitment to tackling the issue.

It is the first in a series of briefing papers being produced by Hourglass that will form the Safer Ageing Index – the first ever comprehensive examination of how the UK is doing when it comes to creating the right conditions for older people to age safely and reduce the risk and impact of abuse and neglect.

About Hourglass

Hourglass is the UK's only charity focused on the abuse and neglect of older people whose mission is simple: end the harm, abuse and exploitation of older people in the UK.

The charity has nearly 30 years' experience as Action on Elder Abuse and over that time its work has touched tens of thousands of people, shaped government policy and amplified the issue in national press.

The charity staffs a free-to-call helpline, with SMS text, email and instant messaging options, which is a lifeline for older men, women, and their families suffering from the five forms of abuse: physical, psychological, financial, sexual or neglect regardless of where the abuse is taking place.

What is the issue?

Despite the number of people it affects and the profound impact it has, the abuse of older people has a very low profile within government, the wider political sphere and amongst the general public.

A study conducted by Hourglass in November 2021 shows the public woefully underestimates the number of older people who experience abuse – not one person surveyed thought the number of people affected by abuse reaches over 2.5m every year. Nearly a fifth thought there were only 10% (250,000) of the actual number of older people experiencing abuse each year. Shockingly, only 7% of the public think of older adults when they think of victims of abuse. 20% of people think of animals.

An Hourglass study in 2020 supports this. It revealed that more than a third of the UK population did not believe that “inappropriate sexual acts directed at older people” counted as abuse. Almost as many as 30% did not view “pushing, hitting, or beating an older person” as abuse.

While the pandemic has increased awareness and concern around other issues that affect older people, such as the impact of Covid in care homes and levels of loneliness and social isolation during lockdown, there hasn't been the same increase or recognition around abuse.

A study in November 2021 shows awareness is still low. Only 7% of the public think of people aged 65+ when thinking of victims of abuse. Not one person thinks that over 2.5m older people experience or are affected by abuse every year in the UK.

Why does it matter?

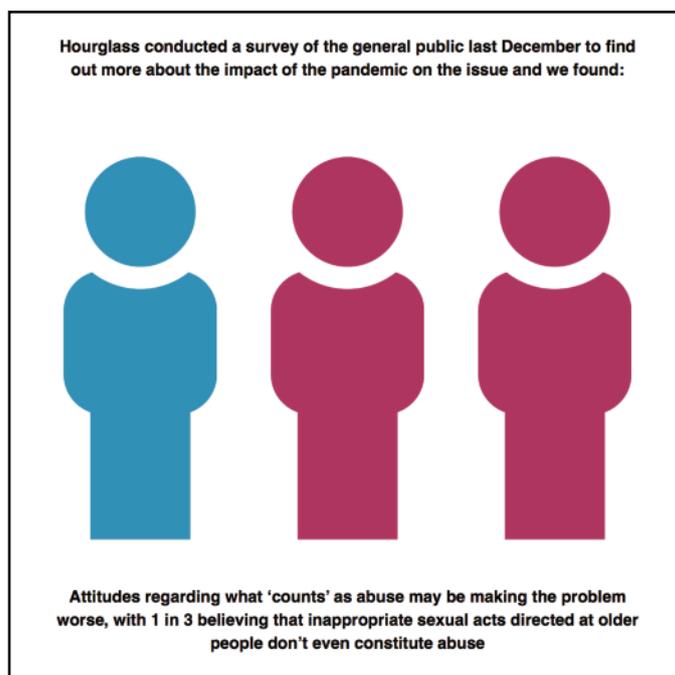
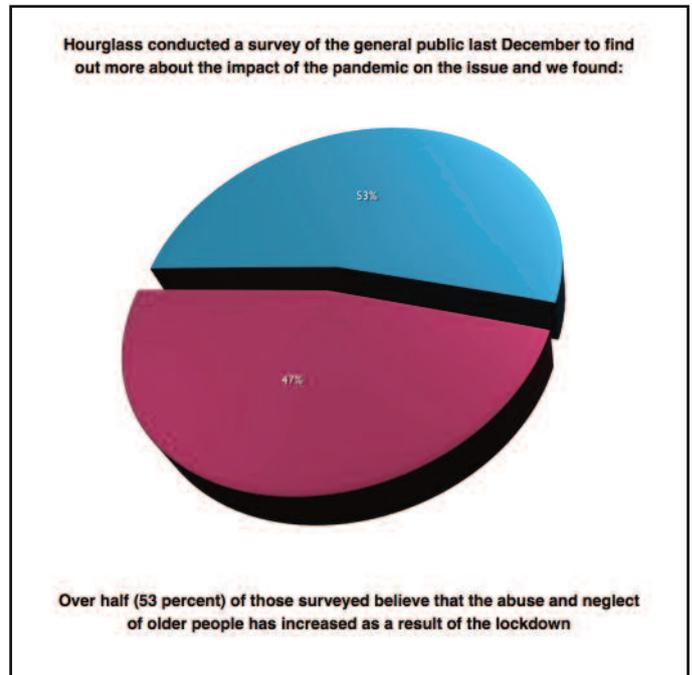
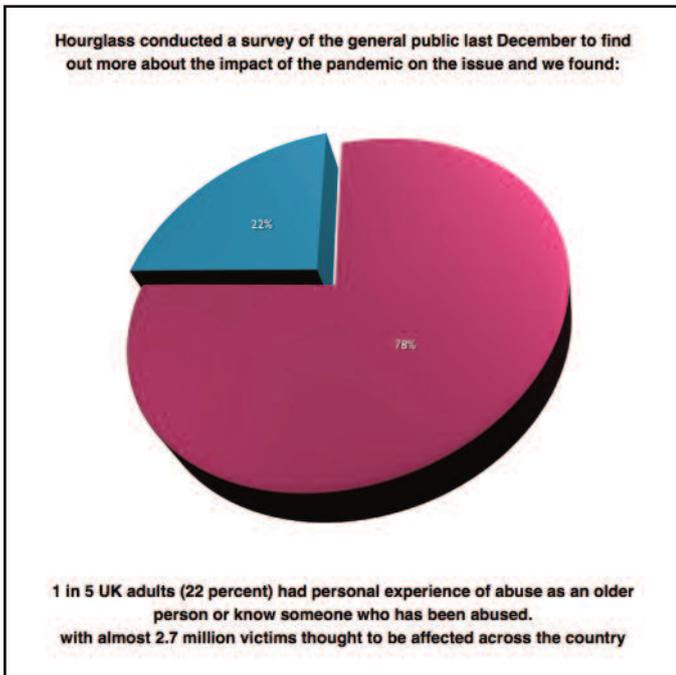
According to WHO, 1 in 6 people over the age of 60 will be victims of abuse. In the UK, that means around 1 million older people experience abuse every year and that is likely to underestimate the extent of the issue as many incidences go unreported or unrecorded.

When you factor in the friends and family of those older people, this is an issue that affects a significant proportion of the population. The extent and impact of abuse has also been made worse by the pandemic.

Hourglass conducted a survey of the general public in 2020 to find out more about the impact of the pandemic on the issue and we found:

- 1 in 5 UK adults (22 percent) had personal experience of abuse as an older person or know someone who has been abused - with almost 2.7 million thought to be affected across the country
- Over half (53 percent) of those surveyed believe that the abuse and neglect of older people has increased as a result of the lockdown
- Attitudes regarding what ‘counts’ as abuse may be making the problem worse, with 1 in 3 believing that inappropriate sexual acts directed at older people don't even constitute abuse.

Hourglass conducted a survey of the general public last December to find out more about the impact of the pandemic on the issue and we found:



What's the current situation?

In order to build a picture of the issue, we examined the level of profile and priority given to the abuse of older people by government decision makers, funders, policy makers, public bodies, MPs and peers at a UK and nations level since the inaugural Safer Ageing Week in November 2020. We also looked at the level of profile given to the issue on Twitter generally over the same time period.

We compared the results with other forms of abuse such as domestic abuse, and a series of more niche issues such as grouse shooting, so we could see the relative levels of profile and priority.

We also looked at how strongly older people were associated with forms of abuse that affect them, such as domestic abuse, as well as some of the specific forms of abuse of older people, such as economic abuse.

We supplemented that research by polling the public on their attitudes towards, and awareness of, the issue.

Looking at Twitter

We used the social listening tool Meltwater to find mentions and references to the abuse of older people and our comparison topics, both in total and looking at specific government and parliamentary sources.

1. United Kingdom only
2. Source: Twitter
3. Language: English
4. Date range: from 1 December 2020 to 9 November 2021 for all search terms and 2019/2020 in addition when looking at the abuse of older people

Accounts of interest*

- Across all UK Twitter output covered by Meltwater in our time period
- Selected Home Office accounts
- Selected Department of Justice accounts
- All UK Police Constabulary main verified accounts
- 10 Downing Street and Boris Johnson PM
- Financial Conduct Authority

**Please refer to the appendix for a list of specific accounts*

General searches

Table 1:

Search terms	Number of mentions 2019-2020	Number of mentions 2020-2021
"elder abuse" OR "elderly abused" OR "abuse of older people" OR "abuse of elderly"	2,590	4,603
"elder neglect" OR "elderly neglected" OR "neglect of older people" OR "neglect of old people" OR "neglect of elderly"	176	116
"social care abuse" OR "Abused in social care"	6	2
"Domestic Abuse" AND (elderly OR elder OR "old person" OR "old people" OR "older person" OR "older people")	380	1,075
(Scam OR Scammed) AND (elderly OR elder OR "old person" OR "old people" OR "older person" OR "older people")	2,649	7,087
("Financial Abuse" OR "financially abused") AND (elderly OR elder OR "old person" OR "old people" OR "older person" OR "older people")	81	204
Isolation AND (elderly OR elder OR "old person" OR "old people" OR "older person" OR "older people")	6,309	8,752

Table 2:

Search term for domestic abuse	Number of mentions 2020-2021
"domestic abuse" OR "domestic violence" OR "intimate partner violence"	502,316
("domestic abuse" OR "domestic violence" OR "intimate partner violence") AND (Child OR children OR Minor)	45,638
("domestic abuse" OR "domestic violence" OR "intimate partner violence") AND ("older people" OR elderly OR "Old person" OR "Older person")	1,361

Table 3:

Search term for animal abuse	Number of mentions 2020-2021
"animal abuse" OR "animal abused" OR "abuse of animal" OR "abuse of animals"	26,911

Table 4:

Search term for child abuse	Number of mentions 2020-2021
"child abuse" OR "children abused" OR "abuse of a child" OR "abuse of children"	190,412

Table 5:

Search term for Safer Ageing	Number of mentions 2020-2021
"safer ageing"	129*
*124 tweets were either tweets by Hourglass owned accounts and retweets and mentions of Hourglass owned accounts. Owned accounts being; @wearehourglass_@HourglassNI @HourglassScot .	

Table 6:

Search terms for other topics	Number of mentions 2020-2021
Grouse Shooting – "grouse shooting"	16,370
Fox hunting – "fox hunt" OR "fox hunting" OR foxhunting	80,554
Potholes - pothole OR potholes	64,357
TV licenses - "tv license" or "tv licensing"	33,332
Parking - Parking AND (Car OR Cars)	136,426

Key take-aways from general searches

- Mentions of the abuse of older people almost doubled between 2019/20 and 2020/21 but from a very low initial base and still dwarfed by mentions of other forms of abuse and our comparison topics
- Grouse shooting was mentioned nearly four times as often as the abuse of older people
- Fox hunting was mentioned nearly 20 times as often and parking nearly 30 times as often
- People tweeted about animal abuse nearly 6 times as much as they tweeted about the abuse of older people
- Although, over 7,000 people published tweets including scams and older people, only 200 published tweets referencing older people and financial abuse
- Out of over 500,000 tweets mentioning domestic violence and abuse only 0.3% also referenced older people. That compares to 10% which referenced children
- There were nearly twice as many mentions of older people in relation to isolation as there were mentions of abuse of older people
- There were 1.3 million mentions on Twitter in our time period. Abuse didn't appear in the top 30 words most frequently with older people in those mentions.

Searching selected government accounts

Prime Minister and Downing Street

- Child or Children – 78 mentions
- Animals Or Wildlife- 5 mentions
- Older people – 1 mention

Home Office stats - Secretary of State, key ministers and permanent secretary

- Children – 139 mentions
- Animals – 19 mentions
- Older people – 5 mentions
- Over the course of a year the Home Office, its Secretary of State, key ministers and permanent secretary mentioned older people five times and of those two were to raise awareness of covid vaccine scams. The same accounts mentioned children 231 times. For context this is out of a total of 7,170 tweets
- Over the course of a year 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.

Department of Justice

- Children – 123 mentions
- Animals and Wildlife -12 mentions
- Older people – 4 mentions

All UK constabulary verified main twitter accounts

- Children – 1,320 mentions
- Animals - 112 mentions
- Older people – 328 mentions
- In a search of all UK constabulary verified main twitter accounts “Parking” was mentioned 291 times.
- Older people appeared 328 times across all UK constabulary verified main twitter accounts. These included appeals for information for crimes against older people and raising awareness of crimes targeted at older people
- The abuse of older people was mentioned 10 times

Financial Conduct Authority

- Out of a total of 794 tweets published by the FCA in the last year “pension scam” and “retirement” were both in the top 30 words most frequently appearing in their tweets.

Looking at government and parliamentary output

Using the same search terms that we used on Twitter, we went through Hansard for mentions and manually searched through relevant speeches and papers.

Searching through Hansard

Table 7:

Search term	2019-2020	2020-2021
"elder abuse" OR "elderly abused" OR "abuse of older people" OR "abuse of elderly"	5	35
"Domestic Abuse" AND (elderly OR elder OR "old person" OR "old people" OR "older person" OR "older people")	29	508
Isolation AND (elderly OR elder OR "old person" OR "old people" OR "older person" OR "older people")	79	238
Total	113	781

Table 8:

Search terms	2020/2021
"animal abuse" OR "animal abused" OR "abuse of animal" OR "abuse of animals"	38
"child abuse" OR "children abused" OR "abuse of a child" OR "abuse of children"	746
"domestic abuse" OR "domestic violence" OR "intimate partner violence"	3603
Grouse shooting – "grouse shooting"	60
Fox hunting – "fox hunt" OR "fox hunting" OR "foxhunting"	915
Potholes – "pothole" OR "potholes"	87
TV licenses – "tv license" OR "TV licencing"	77
Parking – "parking" AND (car OR cars)	1,904

Manual searches

- The abuse of older people was mentioned just 9 times in debates in all Parliaments since 1 December 2020.
- Of these, 4 were references to Hourglass (formerly Action on Elder abuse), 8 were mentions in the House of Lords and 1 in the Scottish Parliament.
- There were 0 mentions of the abuse of older people in the House of Commons by Ministers or Members of Parliament over the same time period.

In comparison:

- There were 200 references to child abuse
- There were 70 references to animal cruelty
- There were 400 references to parking
- 2 references to grouse shooting
- 6 references to fox hunting
- 70 references to potholes
- 13 references to tv licencing

Searching through parliamentary questions there were:

- 0 mentions of the abuse of older people
- 40 mentions of animal abuse
- 1,403 mentions of child abuse
- 1,957 mentions of parking

There were no mentions of the abuse of older people by Rt. Hon. Priti Patel MP, current Home Secretary, Rachel McLean, current Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Safeguarding or Victoria Atkins MP, previous Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Safeguarding.

Public polling

We ran a poll of 1,000 people across the UK to understand more about public understanding of abuse towards older people. Awareness of the issue and how many people it affects every year is very low.

- Only 7% of people think of older adults when they think of victims of abuse. 20% of people think of animals and the majority, 50% think of females
- Not one person thinks that the number of victims reaches over 2.5m every year. Nearly a fifth thought there were only 10% (250,000) of the actual number of older people experiencing abuse each year.

Question 1: When you think about a victim of abuse, which of the following characteristics most spring to mind? (Tick up to two)

Table 9:

Female	50.4%	504
Child	49.9%	499
Animals	20.4%	204
Male	12.3%	123
Working age adult (aged between 18 and 65)	7.7%	77
None of the above	7.3%	73
Older adult (over 65)	6.95	69

Question 2: How many older people (over the age of 65) do you think are victims of abuse each year in the UK?

Table 10:

Less than 250,000	17.0%	170
Between 250,00 and 500,000	19.9%	199
Between 500,001 and 1 million	9.8%	98
Between 1.1 million and 1.5 million	6.8%	68
Between 1.6 million and 2 million	4.2%	42
Between 2.1 million and 2.5 million	2.9%	29
Over 2.5 million, please specify in millions	0.0%	0
I don't know	36.1%	36
Prefer not to say	3.3%	33

What does the research tell us?

The abuse of older people has almost no profile or priority within parliament and in government across the UK. It has a much lower profile than other forms of abuse and even very niche subjects like grouse-shooting. Currently there isn't a single statutory source of funding that ring-fences any of its resources to tackle an issue that affects over a million older people per year.

That lack of profile and priority is reflected in public discourse on Twitter and in general public attitudes. For an issue that affects so many people, it is shameful and really concerning that the abuse of older people seems to be last in line for the government and public alike.

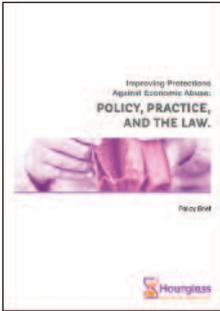
The passage of the Domestic Abuse Bill through parliament over the last year has increased awareness, debate and action on this form of abuse, but it hasn't lead to a commensurate increase for the abuse of older people. As our survey shows, not enough people strongly associate older people as victims of abuse and seriously underestimate the number of older people who experience it.

To tackle this issue, we need:

- An ambitious campaign aimed at the public, government and politicians alike, to increase awareness and move this critical issue up from the last in line when it comes to debate and action
- The commitment of significant ring-fenced statutory funding to support measures to tackle the issue and reduce the number of older people experiencing or at risk of abuse
- The Home Office to take the lead on promoting ageing in the heart of government by appointing a Safer Ageing Minister.

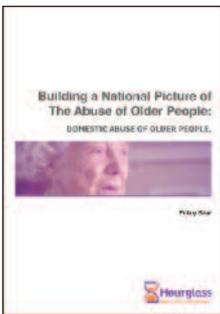
How can I find out more?

Hourglass is producing a series of detailed policy briefings on the different issues that affect safer ageing. Here are details on the ones we have published so far:



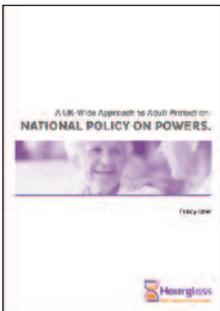
Improving Protections Against Economic Abuse: Policy, Practice, and the Law.

What is economic abuse, and how does it affect older people? This Hourglass policy briefing paper explores the perpetration, impact, and cost of economic abuse, and illustrates how older people comprehend its effects. Within this piece, Hourglass advocates for greater protection for older people from economic abuse, and outlines key future policy recommendations for policymakers, legislators, and practitioners.



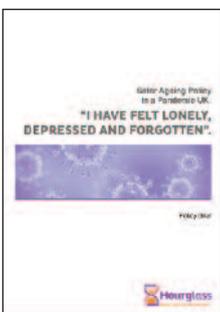
Building a National Picture of The Abuse of Older People: Domestic Abuse of Older People.

Do older people suffer from domestic abuse? This Hourglass policy briefing paper explores the key issues, trends, and barriers surrounding the domestic abuse of older people. Within this piece, Hourglass outlines its work on championing amendments for the Domestic Abuse Bill, as well as lays down future policy recommendations for policymakers, legislators, and practitioners.



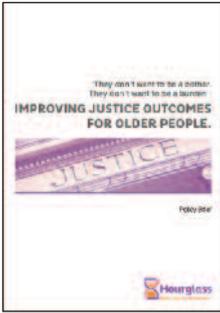
A UK-Wide Approach to Adult Protection: National policy on powers.

Does England need stronger powers of entry legislation? This Hourglass policy briefing paper explores the policy and legislation on current adult protection powers in the four nations, specifically concentrating on power of entry. Within this piece, Hourglass outlines the background, examines the salient issues in this area, and outlines key future policy recommendations for policymakers, legislators, and practitioners.



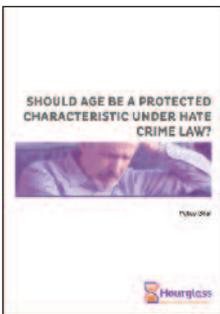
Safer Ageing Policy in a Pandemic UK: 'I have felt lonely, depressed and forgotten'

How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected older people and safer ageing in the UK? This Hourglass policy briefing paper explores the policy decisions and areas of critical concern surrounding the treatment of older people during the pandemic, specifically concentrating on care home issues, misuse of do not resuscitate orders, and increased loneliness. Within this piece, Hourglass outlines the background, examines the salient issues in this area, and outlines key future policy recommendations for policymakers, legislators, and practitioners.



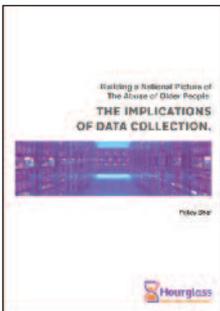
‘They don’t want to be a bother. They don’t want to be a burden’ : Improving justice outcomes for older people.

How does the criminal justice system treat older people? This Hourglass policy briefing paper explores the key issues, policy, and barriers to support that older people face when interacting with the criminal justice system. Within this piece, Hourglass summarizes its position, and outlines key future policy recommendations for policymakers, legislators, and practitioners.



Should Age Be a Protected Characteristic Under Hate Crime Law?

Should crimes committed against older people be charged as hate crimes? This Hourglass policy briefing paper explores the background and context of hate crime legislation, and questions whether age and older people should be protected by it. Within this piece, Hourglass examines the viability of a statutory aggravation based on vulnerability, and outlines key future policy recommendations for policymakers, legislators, and practitioners.



Building a National Picture of The Abuse of Older People: The implications of data collection.

How can better data collection practices enable us to understand and support older people? This Hourglass policy briefing papers explores the background of data collection and investigates the notion that older people are excluded from datasets. Within this piece, Hourglass champions the need for good data practice on the abuse of older people, and outlines key future policy recommendations for policymakers, legislators, and practitioners. Our policy team add new papers on a regular basis. You can see the latest ones [here](#).

About our partners

Slater and Gordon

We can ensure vulnerable clients are independently advised of their choices in terms of will writing, arranging Lasting Powers of Attorney and/or lifetime Trusts. Our work to establish independence includes mental capacity assessments, ensuring no undue influence and that the client's decisions are their own throughout the lifetime of a case.

We offer independent advice in terms of asset protection, including the various ways in which this can be done, clearly communicating the advantages and disadvantages of the options available.

We can access the digital services on behalf of older clients, for example the digital probate application framework, and the online Trust Registration Service, to ensure they can make use of modern technology without feeling overwhelmed. Slater and Gordon Trust Corporation can act as Trustee, Attorney and/or Executor, to ensure assets are correctly, fairly, and legally managed, during the lifetime and after the death of a person.

We can take on an advisory role to a Trustee or an Attorney, to ensure they are undertaking their own duties legally, and to alleviate any pressure they're experiencing from taking on such a role for an older family member or friend.

Essentially, we can offer peace of mind to the older, and perhaps vulnerable client, to ensure that their affairs are in order, and therefore protected from potential economic and/or financial abuse.

For more information visit slatergordon.co.uk or call 0330 158 8367.

Hodge

Hodge is an independently owned group based in Cardiff, offering a range of personal mortgage products, savings products to private and commercial clients, as well as lending to commercial clients nationwide.

Over 85,000 customers across the UK trust Hodge to support them because of its years of expertise and knowledge in the markets it serves. Hodge design products with customers in mind, keeping things simple and straightforward.

The Hodge Foundation, a charity supporting the welfare, medical, academic, and educational areas own 79% of Hodge.

More information can be found on the website www.hodgebank.co.uk. Tools and information around economic abuse can be found here <https://hodgebank.co.uk/vulnerability>

Follow [@HodgeBank](https://twitter.com/HodgeBank) on Twitter



APPENDIX

Accounts searched through Twitter were those listed [here](#) on the gov.uk website, under Home Office. Handles are below.

Selected Home Office accounts:

Main account - @ukhomeoffice

Home Secretary – Priti Patel MP - @pritipatel

Minister for Crime and Policing – Kit Malthouse MP - @kitmalthouse

Minister for Safeguarding – Rachel Maclean MP – @redditchrachel

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State – Tom Pursglove MP - @VotePursglove

Minister of State (Minister for Building Safety and Fire) - Lord Stephen Greenhalgh - @teamgreenhalgh

Minister of State (Minister for Security and Borders) – Damien Hinds MP – @damienhinds

Former Minister of State (Minister for Security and Borders) – James Brokenshire MP – @jbrokenshire

Permanent Secretary at the Home Office – Matthew Rycroft CBE - @MatthewRycroft1

Selected Department of Justice accounts

Main account - @MoJGovUK

Secretary of State for Justice – Dominic Raab MP

Secretary of State for Justice – Robert Buckland MP

Minister for Crime and Policing – Kit Malthouse MP

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice – Antonia Romeo

All UK Police Constabulary main verified accounts

Other accounts audited:

Defra

10 Downing Street and Boris Johnson PM

Government Equalities Office

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Office of the Public Guardian

Victims Commissioner

FCA



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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