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# Elderly neglect claims rise as services are cut

By John Bingham  
SOCIAL AFFAIRS EDITOR

THE full extent to which elderly people are being abandoned by the care system is exposed in official data showing a surge in allegations of neglect.

New Government figures show the number of reports of neglect or omission in the care of elderly or disabled people investigated in England jumped by 13 per cent in the past year alone.

Overall there were just under 41,000 such allegations relating to vulnerable adults — the vast majority of them elderly — logged by social services departments last year following concerns by neighbours, friends, carers and others, a jump of almost 4,800 in 12 months.

The figures from the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) also show smaller increases in the number of referrals to social services departments over alleged physical and psychological abuse.

But claims of institutional abuse in

settings such as care homes fell, while alleged financial abuse of vulnerable adults also edged lower and the total number of “safeguarding referrals” to social services involving adults edged lower overall.

Charities said the figures reflected the increasingly desperate shortage of care for older people in England at a time when the elderly population has expanded but social care budgets have undergone sustained pressure.

The number of adults receiving any form of state support for their care has plunged by more than 500,000 in five years, according to one recent estimate.

Caroline Abrahams, director of Age UK, said: “The standout finding from these new statistics is that referrals for neglect of an older person are significantly up.

“We hope this rise reflects higher public awareness of the need to report any concerns, but we fear it may also be connected to the progressive disintegration of social care in this country.”