

Telegraph 16.11.17

Thousand abuse cases every day against elderly

By Henry Bodkin

MORE than 1,000 cases of suspected abuse of vulnerable adults are now being reported every day, new figures reveal, as experts warn of a growing culture of "ageism and neglect".

The number of concerns raised by public servants rose by six per cent in 2016-17 compared to the previous year, the overwhelming majority relating to pensioners, official Government figures show. Charities have blamed an epidemic of short-staffing in care homes, but also said neglect and abuse - often financial - within families may be responsible for the rise.

In total 364,605 concerns of abuse were raised last year. However, Age UK said the figures were likely to represent only a fraction of the real problem.

Where the location of the risk was known, 36 per cent involved the care home sector, which earlier this year was heavily criticised by the Care Quality Commission which found that one in four homes in England was unsafe.

The watchdog described choosing a safe care home as like "playing Russian roulette".

Under the new Safeguarding Adults Collection regime, concerns about abuse are supposed to be escalated into formal enquiries if an adult who needs care and support is being abused or appears at risk of abuse and they cannot protect themselves.

Last year 151,160 of the 364,605 concerns were escalated into formal enquiries, although there was pronounced regional variation indicating that authorities in some areas were slow to respond.

Richard Powley, head of safeguarding at Age UK, said the new data came amid a "background hum of ageism".

"We should value older people, they have contributed, but they are sometimes written off and their rights are not upheld," he said. "Sometimes it's deliberate harm. Sometimes it's oblivious and sometimes people don't see what they are doing is wrong because they are under a great deal of pressure."