

'The Irish Context'

Elder Abuse and Neglect

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Overview



- Policy responses in ROI;
- Legal issues;
- Incidence data;
- Developing an integrated and comprehensive response.

Working definition in Ireland

“a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within **any relationship** where there is an **expectation of trust** which causes harm or distress to an older person or **violates their human and civil rights**” (Protecting our Futures, 2002)



Context in which it occurs

- Elder abuse is distinguished by caring and trust relationship in the context of **social ageism** (Biggs, 2009)



Societal ageism

“Ageism allows the younger generation to see older people as different from themselves, thus they subtly cease to identify their elders as human beings” (Butler, 1975)



Policy Response



Nationally

- 'Abuse, Neglect and Mistreatment of Older People' (O'Loughlin and Duggan, 1998);
- Working Group on Elder Abuse, 1999;
- 'Protecting our Futures' (Department of Health and Children, 2002);
- Elder Abuse National Implementation Group, 2003;
- National Centre for the Protection of Older People, 2009.

Working group – Carers

Recommendation:

“Adequate support and provision of services be made available to all carers ... adequate support and access to appropriate services for carers can help prevent elder abuse”

HSE response

- National Steering Committee;
- HSE elder abuse service:
 - Four dedicated elder abuse officer posts (three filled)
 - 32 case worker positions (27 filled)
- HSE Elder Abuse Policy, formulated in 2008;
- Training and education for staff;
- Awareness raising campaign – ‘Open your eyes to elder abuse’
- All HSE staff have a duty of care to intervene.



Legal Issues

Legal responses to elder abuse

- No statutory recognition of elder abuse in Ireland;
- Working group (1999) recommended legislation to establish older people's entitlement to core community care services;
- Upcoming mental capacity legislation to replace ward of court system;
- Standards and regulations in domiciliary care.

- Must rely on the same protections offered to other citizens, such as:
 - Non-fatal offences against the person's act (1997)
 - Domestic Violence Act (1996)
 - Safety and barring orders
 - Criminal Law (Rape) Act (1981) and amended act (1990)
 - Criminal Law Sexual Offences Act (1993)



Incidence of Elder Abuse

Estimated Prevalence

Based on international figures it is estimated that between 3% and 5% of older people experience abuse. This equate to between 14,000 and 23,000 older people living in Ireland

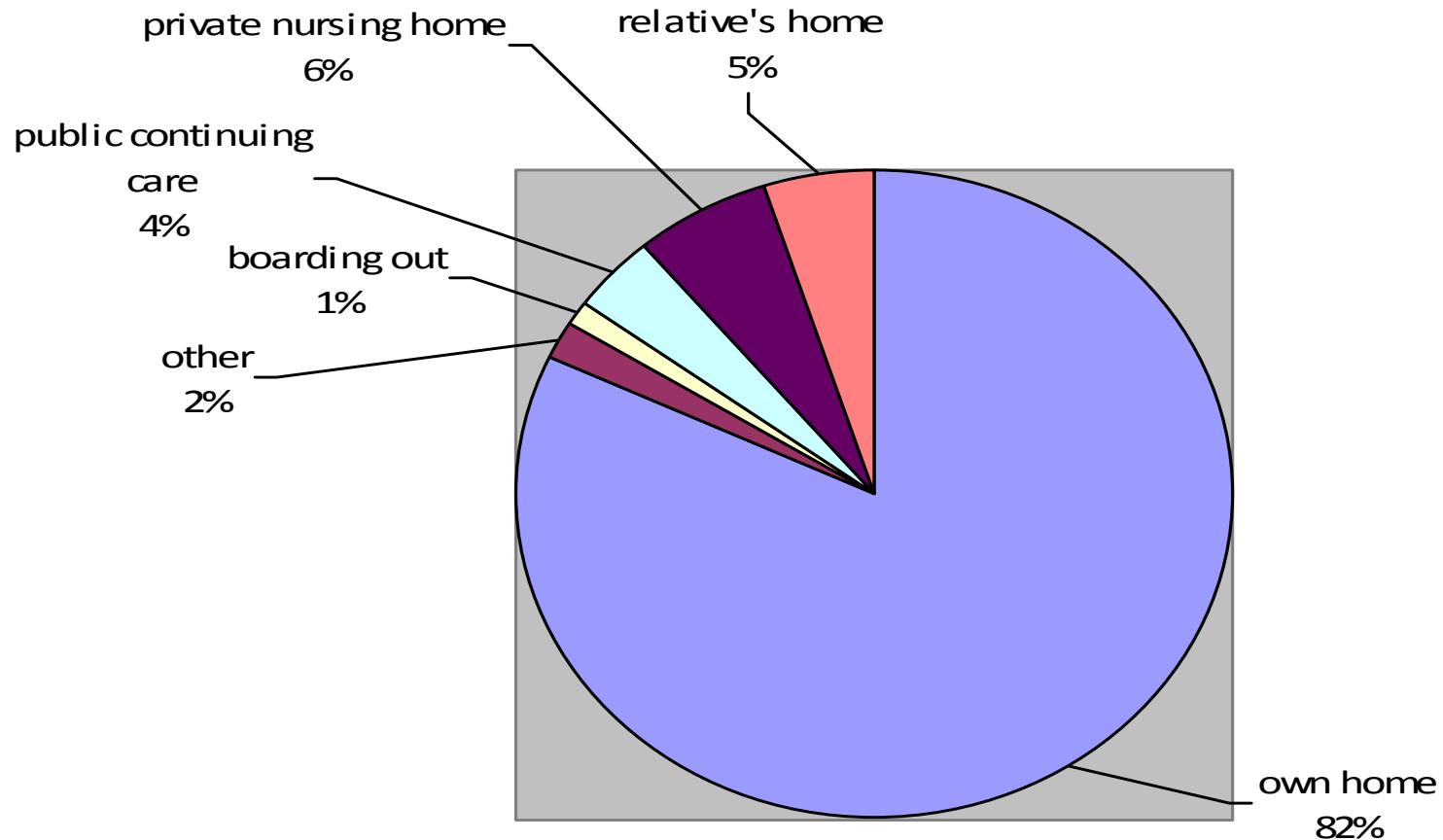
HSE National Data

- 1,840 referrals in 2008;
- Increase from 927 in 2007;
- Public Health Nurse main referrer;
- Most common in people aged over 75 year olds:
 - 45% aged between 75-84
 - 23% being 85+
- Profile of people being referred;
 - 63% female
 - 37% male

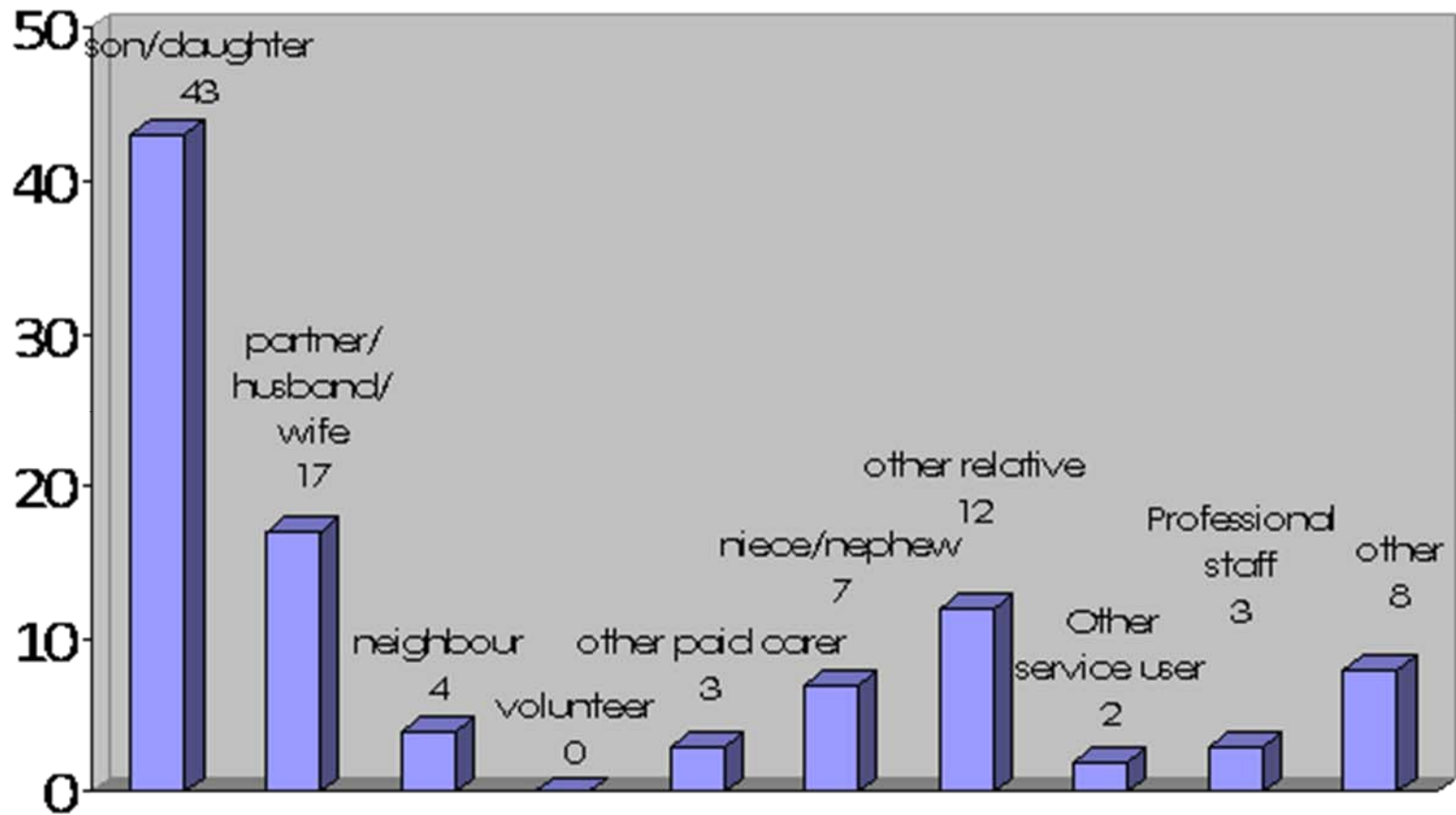
Type of Abuse

Type of abuse	Percentage of referrals
Psychological	26
Self-neglect	20
Neglect	19
Financial	16
Physical	12
Sexual	1
Discrimination	1
Other	5

Place of Residence

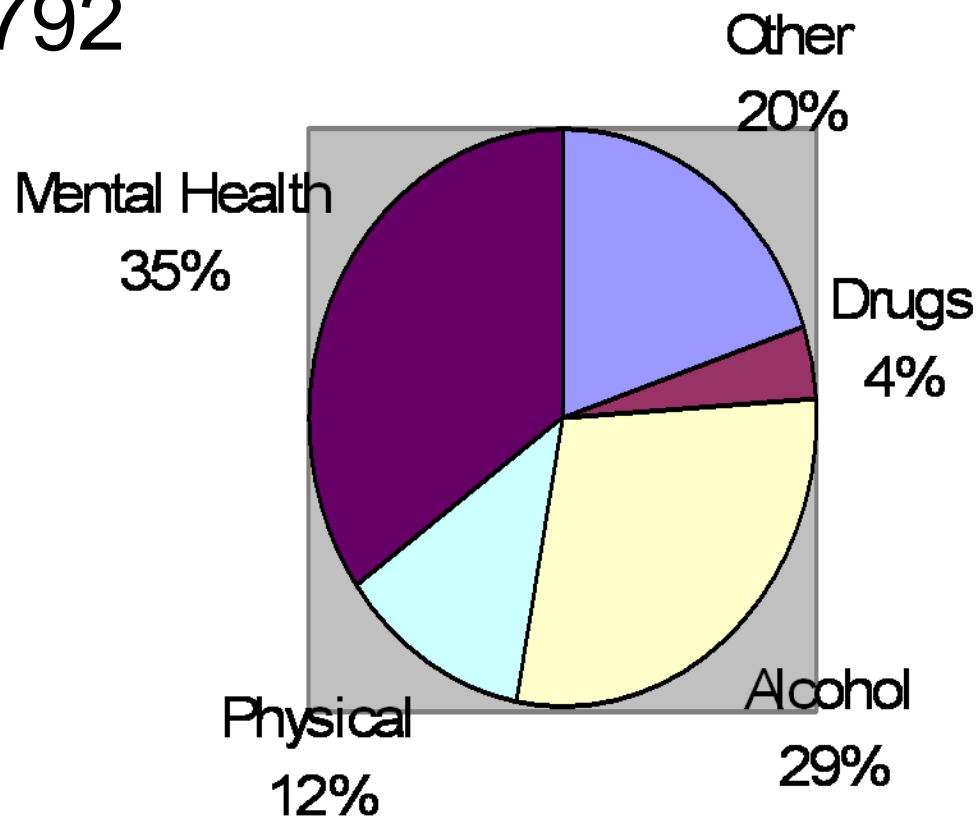


Alleged person causing concern



Issue for alleged person causing concern

N = 792





Building an Integrated Response



Challenges

- Level of ambivalence due to extent of the issue;
- Dealing with a complex phenomenon:
 - different types,
 - different dynamics,
 - investigating risk,
 - what are the suitable solutions (for different forms);
 - under reporting,
 - inspiring trust.

Discussion

- Building relationship with the HSE case workers:
 - provide training to the voluntary and community sector
- Interdisciplinary response needed:
 - what is the role of the community and voluntary sector?

Not a sole practitioner or sole agency response,
there is a need for support, collaboration,
checks and balances (Carter-Anand, 2009)

Useful links

- Age Action Ireland - www.ageaction.ie
- Elder Abuse Case Worker Service - www.hse.ie
- National Centre for the Protection of Older People - www.ncpop.ie
- Health Information Quality Authority - www.hiqa.ie
- The Law Reform Commission - www.lawreform.ie
- Cosc, Department of Justice - www.cosc.ie



World Elder Abuse Day, 15th of June



Thank You

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