

Parliamentary Briefing

No Age Limit: Domestic Abuse

January 2020

Background

Domestic abuse can happen at any age. Over 200,000 people aged 60 to 74 experienced domestic abuse in England and Wales in 2017/2018. Despite this high number, it is concerning that there is currently a lack of recognition and service provision for older victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

The statistics on older victims and survivors of domestic abuse are stark:

- According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales for 2017/18, about 139,500 older women and 74,300 older men experienced domestic abuse in England and Wales in the past year.
- One in four (23%) victims of domestic homicides are over the age of 60.
- Older people are almost equally as likely to be killed by a partner/spouse (46%) as they are their (adult) children or grandchildren (44%).
- The majority of older people killed in their own home die as a result of stabbings (41%).
- The majority of victims are female (67%) and perpetrators are male (81%).

The Domestic Abuse Bill 2019 reached Committee Stage and was an opportunity to create lasting difference to what is understood as domestic abuse and make it easier for people to recognise or report it, as well as improving the resources available to help victims and survivors, including accommodating the needs of older victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

The government announced its intention to re-introduce the Domestic Abuse Bill in the 2019 Queen's Speech. Age UK welcomes the new Domestic Abuse Bill and the government's aspiration to transform the response to domestic abuse and to better protect older victims and survivors, ensuring that they have the support they need.

Age UK's position

Domestic Abuse does not go away with age, and the trauma certainly does not lessen. For older people, domestic abuse is often a hidden issue as there are many factors which deter them from disclosing abuse, including:

- Feelings of shame, embarrassment and often reliance.
- Being reliant on an abusive partner or a family member to provide care, making it especially difficult for them to report abuse or access support.

Despite these obstacles faced by older victims and survivors they are often neglected and forgotten, with no specialised support available.

New legislation to address domestic abuse cannot prevent or stop all instances of it – but it can make it easier for people to recognise or report domestic abuse, as well as improving the resources available to help victims and survivors. **It is the government's duty to ensure that the new Bill protects older victims and survivors of domestic abuse.**

To do this the new Domestic Abuse Bill must:

- **Provide a fair definition:** The definition of domestic abuse must include abuse perpetrated by those who are in trusted positions and provide unpaid care, including friends and neighbours, as well as family members. There is also a role for the CQC to play in ensuring there are sufficient safeguards in place to prevent abuse by paid professionals providing care.
- **Recognise all victims:** Data on domestic abuse must be gathered for all ages, not just people aged 74 and under. Currently data on domestic abuse is only collected on victims and survivors aged 74 and under.
- **Train health care practitioners:** Domestic abuse should be treated as an issue of public health as well as a criminal justice. Training for health care practitioners, including GPs and practice nurses, who work with older people must be introduced to increase interventions in cases of abuse.
- **Protect older victims:** Better links between the NHS and police are needed to ensure older victims of abuse are properly protected and supported

What can you do?

The government has announced its intention to re-introduce the Domestic Abuse Bill and it is important that we continue to make a case for all victims and survivors, no matter their age. We want to see a Bill which helps break down the barriers that older victims and survivors face. You can help us to do this by placing an amendment to the Bill, or raising the issue in Parliament, through a PQ or Westminster Hall Debate.

Get in touch with us

If you have any questions or would like to meet to discuss how we can work together please contact Robert Henderson, Senior Public Affairs Manager, at Robert.Henderson@ageuk.org.uk or 020 3033 135