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## Hourglass Scotland launches the first-ever 24/7 elder abuse helpline but urgently seeks funding to keep it alive as abuse ‘epidemic’ spirals

- Hourglass Scotland launches first 24/7 helpline dedicated to helping older victims of abuse and the services that support them
- UK dealing with a “hidden epidemic” - as many as 2.7 million people are affected by the abuse of older people in the UK<sup>1</sup>
- Only a tiny fraction of victims are getting the help they desperately need<sup>2</sup>
- 28%<sup>3</sup> of calls to the helpline in 2021 took place outside of office hours and went unanswered
- The helpline is moving to a 24/7 operation thanks to funding from the UK Home Office but funds are limited to England-only. The Scottish line is covered through the charity’s own meagre reserves
- Hourglass is calling on care homes, GP surgeries, police, and other charities who support and care for older people to promote the helpline and bring the issue out into the open
- Charity is looking for urgent funds to underpin the service in Scotland

Today, Hourglass, the only charity in Scotland focused on tackling the abuse and neglect of older people, is launching the UK’s first 24/7 helpline as part of a major push to bring the “hidden epidemic” of abuse experienced by older people out into the open and get victims the support they need.

As many as 2.7 million people are thought to be affected by the abuse of older people in the UK, with upwards of 225,000 victims in Scotland, yet new data from the charity’s helpline shows only a fraction of those victims (0.2%) are accessing the helpline to get specialist support from Hourglass.

Thanks to funding from the UK Home Office, the 24/7 helpline means anyone can call, day or night and the 28% of people who sought help in 2021 outside of office hours will now get the support they need. **The Home Office funds cover England but the charity needs support from the Scottish government to ensure service is sustainable in Scotland.**

Speaking about the expanded service, Hourglass CEO Richard Robinson said:

“The Pandemic increased social isolation, the social care crisis, a stretched criminal justice system, a lack of public awareness, all have contributed to unacceptable levels of abuse being experienced by older people.

“Thankfully we are increasingly aware of other forms of abuse like child abuse and domestic violence, but the abuse of older people remains in the shadows even though it affects millions. So many people are suffering and don’t know where to turn for help. We must bring it out into the open and support older people who are experiencing it to get the help they desperately need.

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<sup>1</sup> Hourglass., 2020. Growing Old in the UK

<sup>2</sup> Hourglass helpline data, Jan -Dec 2021

<sup>3</sup> Hourglass helpline data Jan -Dec 2021

“Our helpline going 24/7 is an important step in doing that and I urge any individuals or organisations who care for older people to promote as far and wide as they can.”

[Dr Jessica Taylor](#), best-selling author, psychologist and founder of the charity, Victim Focus, is supporting the launch:

“It’s scandalous that such a widespread form of abuse remains firmly under the radar. Because it’s so hidden in our society, we are making it incredibly hard for those experiencing it to seek help.

We must shine a light on it, destigmatise being a victim of this form of abuse, banish any feelings of shame and show there is help and understanding out there for those it affects – the helpline going 24/7 is brilliant but we all have a role to play in supporting victims.”

Alongside the 24/7 helpline, Hourglass is also working to expand its specialist IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) scheme into more local authority areas, to help older victims remain safe in their homes.

The helpline is also for family members concerned about an older relative/friend, as well as those within the health and social care and criminal justice sectors. The charity is calling on all people and professionals who support older people to reach out, whatever time of day, if they are concerned about abuse, and to promote the helpline number as far and wide as possible.

**ENDS**

#### **Notes to editors**

#### **ABOUT HOURGLASS:**

Hourglass is the only charity in Scotland 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, previously 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 which is a lifeline for older men, women and their families suffering from all forms of abuse including: physical, psychological, financial, sexual, domestic abuse or neglect. <https://www.wearehourglass.org/>