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02/05/2025

Aidan Farrelly, TD
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2
E: aidan.farrelly@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Farrelly,

Re: PQ No. 14600/25

To ask the Minister for Health the number of reports to the HSE of elder abuse, by category of abuse, in 2023, 2024 and to date in 2025; the number of cases investigated and resolved over that time; and the number of cases that the health ombudsman has reviewed and is reviewing in respect of safeguarding of older persons.

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

Elder Abuse notifications to the HSE:
The HSE launched the National Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse, National Policy and Procedures in December 2014 and the HSE Adult safeguarding service is delivered by teams of social workers including in some areas clinical nurse managers located across the new Regional and Integrated Care Areas. With reference to the number of elder abuse notifications to the HSE in 2023 there were 5,582 safeguarding notifications regarding concerns relating to adults aged over 65 years submitted the HSE Safeguarding and Protection Teams. The Table below gives a breakdown of abuse categories for adults over and under 65 years of age.

National Safeguarding Office

Table: Abuse Types (all cases) by age of adult at risk of abuse in 2023

Abuse Types Alleged	18-64 Years		65-79 Years		80+ Years		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Physical	**4805**	33%	1117	26%	809	25%	6731	30%
Sexual	630	4%	135	3%	131	4%	896	4%
Psychological	6867	47%	1660	39%	1048	32%	9575	43%
Financial	769	5%	650	15%	598	18%	2017	9%
Neglect	905	6%	444	10%	475	15%	1824	8%
Discriminatory	30	0%	15	0.35%	11	0%	56	0%
Institutional	432	3%	99	2%	56	2%	587	3%
Self-Neglect	141	1%	144	3%	111	3%	396	2%
Total	**14579**	**100%**	**4264**	**100%**	**3239**	**100%**	**22082**	**100%**

Each safeguarding concern that arises is subject to a preliminary screening. If an elder abuse concern happens in a service setting such as a residential centre or community nursing unit the preliminary screening is conducted by a Designated Officer in the centre. When elder abuse concerns arise in the community a social worker within the HSE Safeguarding and Protection Teams carries out the preliminary screening.

As part of a preliminary screening assessment an outcome is determined. The outcomes are; reasonable grounds for concern, no grounds for concern and additional information required (a holding position until either of the two options above are reached). Designated Officers in service setting include an outcome for each preliminary screening and the outcome will be agreed with the SPT.
The outcomes agreed with the Safeguarding Teams for adults aged over 65 in 2023:
Reasonable grounds: 66%
No grounds: 20%
Additional Information: 14%

Please note that figures for 2024 are awaiting publication and this is planned in Quarter 3 of 2025. Elder Abuse notifications for 2025 will be published in 2026.

Referral of complaints for review to the Ombudsman Office
The Office of the Ombudsman looks at individual complaints from people who feel treated unfairly by a public service provider such as the HSE or as a resident in a nursing home. Persons dissatisfied with HSE Services will normally have gone through the HSE complaints process before going to the Ombudsman On receipt of a complaint, the Ombudsman will carry out a preliminary examination to see if the complaint needs a formal investigation. The Ombudsman Office can examine complaints about how

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staff in nursing homes or in HSE Safeguarding Teams carry out their everyday administrative activities when providing services. These include complaints about delays or failing to take action. The Ombudsman does not investigate professional clinical judgement of social workers. Persons who have had involvement with HSE Safeguarding Teams may raise a complaint for independent review by the Ombudsman Office.

Please note that the nature of the complaint to the Ombudsman may be in relation to a service provider rather than direct actions/ inactions of the HSE Safeguarding and Protection Teams. With regard to Elder Abuse complaints where there was or is involvement by the HSE Safeguarding Teams raised with Ombudsman's Office seeking examination please see the figures for 2023, 2024 and 2025:

2023 – 3

2024 – 5

Up to end of March of 2025 – 2

For further information please contact me via the Office contact details enclosed

Yours Sincerely,

Tim Hanly

_____

General Manager | National Safeguarding Office

Copy to HSE PAD at PQuestions@hse.ie

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