



SCSN Briefing Paper No 06 – Safety of Vulnerable Groups

1 Topics

- Older People
- Sexual exploitation
- Mental Health
- Children and Young People
- Human Trafficking

2 Executive Summary

An aging population, changes and growth in technology, internet based crimes, health issues and the current economic climate are some of the contributing factors to creating vulnerable groups. Two of the common themes that can lead to increased vulnerability are alcohol and drugs.

It is well documented that Scotland has an ageing population. Between 2004 and 2031 the number of people aged 50+ is projected to rise by 28% and the number aged 75 and over is projected to increase by 75%. There are also fewer children aged 0-15 and people aged 16-64 and these numbers are projected to decrease by 15% and 11% respectively by 2031. People are also living longer and life expectancy at birth is projected to increase from 74.3 years for males and 79.4 years for females for those born around 2004 to 79.2 years and 83.7 years respectively by 2031. People are therefore living longer at older ages. For example, a male aged 65 in 2004 could expect to live another 15.6 years on average, a female of the same age another 18.5 years. This is projected to increase to 19.6 years for males and 22.1 years for females by 2031.

There are now more over 50's living alone. Within this age group, women are more likely to live alone, but the number of men living alone is increasing faster as their life expectancy increases. A recent report recognised that older people generally want to stay in their own homes as they age, which can create an increased demand upon home help and carer services. It can also make them more vulnerable to issues such as doorstep crime. It is now generally accepted that this issue is significantly under-reported by approximately 90%. Strathclyde Police analysis of incidents between August and November 2010 showed that 133 incidents were recorded. Based on the hypothesis of 90% under-reporting, this figure is more likely to be over 1000 incidents in the same period. Research has shown that the average age of those affected by doorstep crime is 81 years, with 77% being female and 74% living alone.

The exploitation of children and young people via the internet (through computers and mobile phones) is a growing concern as the numbers with access to this type of technology are ever increasing. The risks posed by these technologies are not yet fully understood however, research conducted in the Netherlands by the My Child Online Foundation in 2006, involving 10,900 participants aged between 13 and 19 years, reveals that 47% of girls who responded to the survey said they had received unwanted requests to perform a sexual act in front of a webcam. In addition, young people, often through their own peer groups, are vulnerable to cyber bullying, which has, in some cases, led to suicide.

Recent figures show that in Scotland in 2009 there were 746 suicides (including both events of intentional self-harm and of undetermined intent). This is equivalent to levels in the mid-1990s. Rates of suicide increased from the early 1980s and peaked

around 2000. Based on three-year rolling averages there was a 7.4% fall in suicide rates between 2000-02 and 2007-09. Around three quarters of suicides each year are completed by males. Similarly there has been a continuous increase in the number of prescriptions for antidepressants from 1.16 million in 1992/93 to 4.3 million in 2009/10, with a commensurate increase in cost. Estimated daily use of antidepressant drugs by the population aged 15 to 90 increased from 1.9% in 1992/93 to 10.4% in 2009/10. This signals either an increase in poor mental health or an increase in those accessing diagnostic and treatment services.

Over the last few years the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation has gained increasing attention. It is extremely difficult to accurately assess the number of women involved. The UK Action Plan on Tackling Trafficking 2007 estimated that approximately 4000 women might be trafficked into and within the UK per annum. In Scotland between September 2007 and March 2008 during the second nationwide police led anti trafficking operation 79 potential victims were recovered, 15 of whom were women and believed to have been trafficked for sexual exploitation. Multiple links were found between human trafficking and other forms of organised crime such as Class A drugs, cannabis cultivation, money laundering and other serious fraud. Where the victim's country or continent of origin was known, most originated from Asian and African countries. Few of these individuals experienced any freedom of movement once they were trafficked and most had felt under threat in their countries of origin.

3 Key Statistics

- Between 2004 and 2031 the number of people aged 50+ is projected to rise by 28% and the number aged 75+ is projected to increase by 75%.
- Estimated daily use of antidepressant drugs by the population aged 15 to 90 increased from 1.9% in 1992/93 to 10.4% in 2009/10.
- Of the 177 fire deaths across the Fatal Fire Survey, 16 were recorded as suicide.
- Over 90% of older people involved in the Fatal Fire Survey had other contributory factors such as mobility problems, disability, mental health issues or an alcohol involvement.
- Approximately 4000 women are trafficked into and within the UK per annum.

4 Discussion Questions

- What are the challenges for vulnerable groups in the next 5-10 years?
- Are there any examples of effective projects or initiatives that we should be promoting the roll out of?
- As regards preventative spending – what should our three priorities be, and who do we need to work in partnership/collaboratively with to achieve these?
- Within the 'Breaking Down Barriers – Age Scotland's Manifesto for the 2011 Scottish Parliament Elections' there was a suggestion put forward by Age Scotland that a new National Outcome for older people's health and wellbeing should be adopted. Should this be included as a National Outcome?

Briefing Paper produced by:
Scottish Community Safety Network
November 2011
Version 1