

143 cases of suspected sex abuse reported in nursing homes and residential disability centres

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A total of 143 cases of suspected sex abuse in nursing homes and residential disability centres were reported in the last seven years.

There were 87 in the nursing homes and 56 in the disability centres, the Health Information and Quality Authority has revealed.

It is understood the vast majority of victims were elderly and disabled women and many had dementia.

The allegations were made by relatives, anonymous sources and staff including the HSE safeguarding and protection teams.

Some of the cases were referred to the Gardaí but others weren't and the forces didn't get involved until the HIQA forced facilities to do so.

Last year was the worst with 32 reported incidents followed by 2016 with 27.

In the first few weeks of 2022 five cases have come to light.

Fifty three family members made reports to HIQA – followed by 44 employees.

The figures were released by Health Minister Stephen Donnelly in a written Dail response to Louth Fine Gael TD Fergus O'Dowd.

Mr Donnelly said: "I am advised by HIQA from January 2015 to February 2022 unsolicited information was received and processed by HIQA and the chief inspector of social services in relation to reports of alleged sexual abuse."

Deputy O'Dowd said in almost all the cases it was either physical or sexual abuse.

He added: "These crimes are being committed by a very tiny minority in care homes.

"But we need a new national policy on the issue, no more secrecy or cover ups and strong punishments for the evil perpetrators."

If you have been affected by any of the issues raised in this article, you can contact Dignity4Patients, whose helpline is open Monday to Thursday 10am to 4pm.