

## Share and Learn Self-Neglect



**Definition:** The Care and Support Statutory Guidance 2021 for the Care Act (2014) describes self-neglect as 'a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. Self-neglect may not prompt a section 42 enquiry. An assessment should be made on a case-by-case basis. A decision on whether a response is required under safeguarding will depend on the adult's ability to protect themselves by controlling their own behaviour. There may come a point when they are no longer able to do this, without external support.

### Recognising self-neglect:

- \* Self-neglect may accompany **hoarding**; this is where a person keeps excessive amounts of items such as newspapers, children's toys, letters etc. Environmental Health and the Fire Service are organisations who can offer support where there are concerns around infestation and fire.
- \* Lack of self-health care may impact on a **person's health and safety**. Refusal to take or taking too much prescribed medication may impact on health. A person may not follow guidance given to keep a person safe, eg smoking whilst using emollient creams after advice has been given and understanding the consequences.
- \* Neglecting to care for one's **personal hygiene**. This may be seen in a person unwilling or unable to keep themselves and their clothing clean; this may be due to internal struggles or blockers or they maybe not aware that they are unclean. It may also impact on the care of wounds that require treatment ie ulcers. These factors may also impact on their 'family' especially if there are children in the home or they have caring responsibilities for others which may also put them at risk.
- \* A very **unhygienic environment** may impact on the safety of the environment. Others living in the same property will also be affected. Overflowing bins and blocked toilets will encourage rodent infestations, animals within the property that are not cared for hygienically will also impact on a person's health. Debris and liquids across floors can also pose problems with slips and falls.
- \* Substance abuse, ie **drugs and alcohol** will also impact on self-neglect. Often a person under the influence of such substances may have other medical issues and may not be fully aware of the damage they are posing to themselves and others.
- \* Inappropriate or excessive poor **management of personal affairs** can also be seen as examples of self-neglect. Responding to requests for money when they have insufficient funds themselves is often recognised with people who have a learning disability or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

SCIE (Social Care Institute of Excellence)

### Why do People Self-neglect

People may self-neglect for a variety of reasons:

- unmet care and support needs
- an inability to maintain own self-care and household chores
- chronic use of substances and/or alcohol impacting on their functioning
- having parents who hoarded (a learnt behaviour)
- childhood neglect, trauma or an adverse experience
- the impact of abuse or neglect domestic violence and abuse
- life changing events such as loss of a job, social status or accommodation, bereavement
- the loss of a strongly held value system
- reduced independence due to an accident, trauma, major illness or the onset of frailty.



Manchester Safeguarding Partnership

## Local Cases

Ruth was a known homeless diabetic who at the time was not taking her prescribed medication. She lived in a hotel where she was supported by the Manager and two friends. She had leg ulcers and other skin issues, put often refused any medication or intervention. Following a fall, she was admitted to hospital where again she refused to follow the medication plan. She was assessed as having the capacity to make choices.

Lucy was a 75 year old lady when she was referred to the Safeguarding Team by the Environment Health Services. She was known to be self-neglecting as well as hoarding items that were of personal value since the age of 20 years. Joint work across Agencies helped her to re-engage with Services including her GP.

John grew up towards the latter end of his childhood with his grandma as his mother had mental difficulties and alcohol misuse and demonstrated self-neglect as well as neglecting her children. His behaviour at home was challenging, he ignored rules and demonstrated impulsive behaviour. He was often involved in petty crime as a child, this continuing into early adult hood. Following the death of his grandma, he became homeless, was reluctant to accept support and accommodation and was seen to be at risk from others he mixed with.

Rob is 67 years with 15+ years involvement with Adult Social Care due to self-neglecting and hoarding. Court Ordered property clearance completed 10 years ago had significant impact on Rob's mental state and he disengaged with professionals and blamed the Local Authority for unlawful removal of his belongings. After seven months of trust and rapport building Rob is now fully engaged with property clearance with his involvement and engaging with package of care and District Nurses to address self-care.

## Key Learning from local cases for self-neglect

**Multiagency working** People who self-neglect require a multiagency approach to manage their case, this will allow for shared decision making and risk assessment. When working multiagency, SMART learning outcomes will need to be identified which can be translated into work outcomes that can be used to capture the impact of practice.

(SMART= Specific \* Measurable \* Achievable \* Realistic \* Time bound)

**Supporting the Person**-Each case is as individual as the person it relates to, putting the person at the heart of it will ensure that their best interest is paramount; (Making Safeguarding Personal). It is important to develop a 'Relationship Based' practice, this will allow strong connections to be built with the person and their 'Family' and will forge trust between those involved. Agencies may need to allocate extra time and resources to support the person as those that self-neglect and /or hoard require an individualised approach; these may be limiting factors for some Agencies.

**Supporting the person who hoards**-Hoarding can be described as compulsive behaviour where numerous possessions which are not really needed are accumulated. To support a person who hoards, the Professional will be required to develop a strong relationship to allow for them to work together for a negotiated solution. 'Blitz Clearing' answers the Professional needs and not the Hoarders and may severally impact on their relationship. A plan for clearing, along with an appropriate Care Package is the first step on what could be a long journey.

**Closing a case**- Knowing when to close a case is often challenging. People who self-neglect are often supported by a number of different agencies, so it is important when closing a case to ensure that support is provided by all agencies and there is an agreement between them when a case is to be closed based on risk.

**Non-engagement**- For those that are reluctant to engage, Professionals may need to re-consider how they can engage with them in a way that the individual feels is meaningful. Non-engagement impacts on face-to-face meetings as well as following Plans, these may be care, support or medical. Time is often needed to understand why the person feels that way before progress can be made. Other factors may also impact on their non-engagement such as physical illness, family dynamics and upbringing and motivation.

**Adverse Childhood Experience (ACES) and Trauma Informed Practice**- As children grow and mature into



adults both positive and negative experiences shape the person they become. Domestic violence, abuse, bereavement, and the way a child experiences their childhood will all impact on the person long into adulthood. Trauma Informed Practice requires Professionals to consider the impact of the role of the trauma on a person's life and how they would behave differently if they did not experience the trauma. Inadvertently adding stress to a person's life may slow down a person's recovery.

**Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM)**-MARM and meetings around MARM are tools that will support the person who is known to self-neglect. Many 'heads and hands' around the table, working in a coordinated way, and producing SMART actions that support the person, with the opportunity to review, reflect and re-new will provide a supportive network for that person.

### Supporting those who self-neglect

**S**haring of Information-think about how you will share the information and with whom. The person may have a good relationship with one particular agency or Professional who may be able to lead the multiagency response. Utilise Local Partners that may be able to help like the RSPCA, Environmental Health, Voluntary groups.



**E**ncourage the person to take control, they should always be at the heart of any planned actions. Consider accessibility and how the person will access services. Cases should not be closed if a person is proving difficult to engage with. Think of different ways to gain their trust, 'time and patience' may be your friend.

**L**egal Literacy is the ability to connect relevant legal rules with the professional priorities and objectives of ethical practice.

- Doing things right
- Doing right things.
- Rights based thinking

Michael Preston-Shoot 2021

**F**amily Involvement-with the person's consent try to engage the family, including children in an age-appropriate way. Remember, the family may extend beyond relatives and include close friends, religious groups and other support networks

**N**on-judgemental-Making judgements about how a person lives or their family's cleanliness is not appropriate. Everyone is different.

**E**mpathy- It is often difficult to empathise with a person when we do not understand why they behave that way. Get to know the person to understand how their family works or why they feel it's important to live that way. Work patterns and resources don't often support long-term, relationship-based work.

**G**et alongside the person and get to know them and their family. Consider whether advocacy is needed; 'self-funders' are entitled to a care and support assessment as others whose care is funded by the Council. Challenge decisions if you don't agree with them and escalate them if necessary. Always remember to 'Think Family' and consider any risks to those living with or closely related to the person who is self-neglecting.

**L**ook beyond the obvious. Demonstrating Professional Curiosity often means asking the question that is 'niggling you, but you cannot find the answer'.

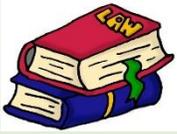
**E**vidence clearly your actions. Records should be clear and support 'Defensible Decision Making'. Records should record interventions, decisions and rationales. If there is not a written or verbal record, it would be difficult to prove it happened.

**C**apacity-Consider the impact of Mental Capacity on their choice of lifestyle. Capacity may fluctuate, loss of Capacity may be temporary as in the case of illness, dementia, mental disorders or brain injury. Medication and addiction can also impact on capacity, this may be due to side effects or under or overuse. Ask questions, ask questions in another way, and ask questions on another day.

**'Think outside the box'**-Explore alternatives to a solution; fear of change may be an issue so explain alternative approaches to a solution, try to understand the individual and what may be driving their behaviour. Work from

the perspective of the person, support them to take control of providing solutions to their problems -Making Safeguarding Personal. Local partners and voluntary groups may be able to offer services, eg cleaning and decluttering services, self-help groups.

### Legislation that offers guidance



**The Care Act (2014) Statutory Guidance update 2021 Sect. 14.17** – self-neglect is included as a category under adult safeguarding.

**Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998** gives us a ‘right to respect for private and family life’. However, this is a qualified right and there may be justification to override it, for example, protection of health, prevention of crime, protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

**Mental Health Act (2007) s.135** – if a person is believed to have a mental disorder and they are living alone and unable to care for themselves, a magistrate’s court can authorise entry to remove them to a place of safety.

**Mental Capacity Act (2005) s.16(2)(a)** – the Court of Protection has the power to make an order regarding a decision on behalf of an individual. The court’s decision about the welfare of an individual who is self-neglecting may include allowing access to assess capacity.

**Public Health Act (1984) s.31-32** – local authority environmental health could use powers to clean and disinfect premises but only for the prevention of infectious diseases.

**The Housing Act 1988** – a landlord may have grounds to evict a tenant due to breaches of the tenancy agreement.  
(SCIE)

### Resources that can support

Alcohol Change UK (2019) *Learning for Tragedies*

<https://alcoholchange.org.uk/publication/learning-from-tragedies-an-analysis-of-alcohol-related-safeguarding-adult-reviews-published-in-2017>

Barnett D (2018) *Self-Neglect and Hoarding: A Guide to Safeguarding and Support* Jessica Kingsley

Braye S, and Preston-Shoot M (2020) *Working with People who Self-Neglect : Practice Tool 2020*. Research in Practice

Care and Support Statutory Guidance 2021

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>

Dorset & BCP Multi-Agency Self-neglect and Hoarding Guidance

Dorset & BCP Self-Neglect Toolkit

Dorset & BCP Self-neglect Professional Checklist

Dorset & BCP Self-neglect and Hoarding Multiagency Meeting Notes

<https://www.bcpsafeguardingadultsboard.com/the-workforce.html>

Preston-Shoot, M. (2020) *Adult Safeguarding and Homelessness: A Briefing on positive practice*. London: LGA/ADASS

Research in Practice for Adults (2017) *Working with People who Hoard*

<https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/adults/publications/2017/january/working-with-people-who-hoard-frontline-briefing-2017/>

