

7 MINUTE BRIEFING

Self-Neglect



**KNOWSLEY
SAFEGUARDING
ADULTS BOARD**

PREVENTION THROUGH PARTNERSHIP



1. What is Self-Neglect?

Self-neglect differs from other forms of abuse because the adult at risk is the person alleged to have caused harm

Self-neglect can include:

- Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety
- Neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health, or surroundings
- Inability to avoid harm as a result of self-neglect
- Failure to seek help or access services to meet health and social care needs
- Inability or unwillingness to manage one's personal affairs

2. What can cause self-neglect?

There are a number of factors that can contribute to self-neglect:

- A person's brain injury, dementia or other mental health condition
- Obsessive compulsive disorder or hoarding disorder
- Physical illness which has an effect on abilities, energy levels, attention span, organisational skills or motivation
- Reduced motivation as a side effect of medication
- Addictions- drugs, alcohol
- Traumatic life change
- Bereavement

3. Possible indicators of self-neglect:

Physical appearance:

- Poor personal hygiene
- Not wearing suitable clothing for the weather
- Messy hair, nails, or clothes
- Unexplained weight loss

Nutrition:

- Poor diet and nutrition
- Dehydration

Mental Health:

- Decreased ability to reason
- Confusion
- Depression
- Psychosis, such as hallucinations
- Refuse to consider health care provider's recommendations

4. Possible indicators of self-neglect:

Living conditions:

- Unkempt home
- Home in disrepair
- Dangerous living conditions
- Home infestations (e.g., mice, insects)
- Utilities not working- heating, lighting
- Rubbish accumulating outside
- Threatened eviction

Health:

- Not taking medication
- Refusal to seek medical treatment for illness/serious illness

Behaviour:

- Social isolation
- Refusing to let people who provide services into the house
- Anti-social behaviour, not getting along with others
- The person may not feel that they need support

5. Things to consider:

- The Care Act 2014 included self-neglect as a category of harm
- Not all people who self-neglect will have care & support needs
- While cases of self-neglect may not prompt a s42 safeguarding enquiry, there may come a time where the person who is self-neglecting may no longer be able to protect themselves
- If no s42 safeguarding enquiry is taking place, it may be appropriate to initiate the [MARAM process](#) to bring agencies together to manage risks
- **Capacity-** the person may have the capacity make decisions on how they live
- **Hoarding-** not everyone who hoards will experience self-neglect, each case needs to be considered on an individual basis
- **Professional curiosity-** there may be more going on for the person than self-neglecting; find out what is going on in the persons life, ask questions
- **Recording-** document interventions, decisions & rationale

6. Response & best practice:

- **Multi-agency** – work with partners to ensure the right approach for each individual
- **Person centred** – respect the views and the perspective of the individual, listen to them and work towards the outcomes they want
- **Acceptance** – good risk management may be the best achievable outcome, it may not be possible to change the person's lifestyle or behaviour
- **Analytical** – it may be possible to identify underlying causes that help to address the issue
- **Non-judgemental** – it isn't helpful for practitioners to make judgements about cleanliness or lifestyle; everyone is different
- **Patience and time** – short interventions are unlikely to be successful, practitioners should be enabled to take a long-term approach
- **Trust** – try to build trust and agree small steps
- **Reassurance** – the person may fear losing control, it is important to allay such fears
- **Bargaining** – making agreements to achieve progress can be helpful but it is important that this approach remains respectful

7. Further Information & support:

- The Care Act [Statutory Guidance](#)
- **Hoarding support:** [Hoarders helping Hoarders](#)
- [scie.org.uk- self neglect](#)
- **Knowsley/JMU self-neglect tool kit** [Self-neglect-guide-Knowsley-23.11.22.pdf](#)
- If you think a person at risk would meet the criteria for a Safeguarding enquiry: **Knowsley Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, (MASH) call 0151 443 2600, or visit [Knowsley Safeguarding Adults](#)**