

SAFEGUARDING ADULTS WEEK 2021

Self-neglect

What is self-neglect?

Self-neglect covers a wide range of behaviour, neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding (Department of Health 2016).

Research has suggested that there are three recognised forms of self-neglect which include:

- **Lack of self-care:** this may involve neglecting personal hygiene, nutrition and hydration or health. This type of neglect would involve a judgement to be made about what is an acceptable level of risk and what constitutes wellbeing.
- **Lack of care of environment:** this may result in unpleasant or dirty home conditions and an increased level of risk in the domestic environment such as health and safety and fire risks associated with hoarding. This may be subjective and require a judgement call to determine whether the conditions within a person's home are acceptable
- **Refusal of services that could alleviate these issues:** this may include the refusal of care services, treatment, assessments or intervention, which could potentially improve self-care or care of one's environment

Self-neglect and hoarding: spotting the signs

In the home:

- Having no food in the home, or unsuitable food
- Having no heating in cold weather
- Not cleaning their home leading to infestations of insects or other animals
- Not allowing people to make repairs when it is unsafe
- Not allowing important people access e.g. landlord, water, gas or electricity workers, health or care workers etc.
- Not disposing of rubbish or hoarding items or animals

About the person:

- Not washing or looking after themselves
- Wearing inappropriate, dirty, soiled or torn clothing
- Not having necessary medical aids e.g. glasses, hearing aids, walking frames
- Refusing medication or treatment which leads to ill health
- Refusing to engage with support

Who is at greater risk?

Those at greater risk include the elderly, people with physical or sensory impairments, people with learning disabilities, people living with severe illnesses, dementia or confusion, or people living with mental ill health.

If the self-neglect makes the person unwell, or is impacting on the health and wellbeing of others, it is important the right help and support is provided.

We need to make sure people are aware of the information and support that is available locally.

Self-neglect and hoarding: what might cause it?

- Fear of losing control
- Pride in self sufficiency
- Sense of being connected to what surrounds them
- Mistrust of professionals or people in authority
- Social isolation
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Age related changes in physical or mental health
- Bereavement /traumatic event
- Mental health difficulties
- Targeted by a particular individual, group or gang who have been able to identify their vulnerability
- Fear and anxiety

Coronavirus and self-neglect

Protecting adults with care and support needs from harm and neglect needs to remain our top priority in these challenging and unprecedented times.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created new levels of isolation and loneliness for people increasing the risk of self-neglect and making it harder to spot.

We all need to remain vigilant and report any concerns we may have in the usual way. Safeguarding support services are still operating and referrals continue to be addressed promptly.

What to do if you are worried?

Working with partner agencies, Rochdale Adult Care, part of Rochdale Borough Council, are on hand to support people at risk of self-neglect and the earlier people get help the better.

You can contact Rochdale Adult Care on 0300 303 8886 or email adult.care@rochdale.gov.uk

Adult Care professionals are highly experienced, compassionate and will take all concerns seriously. They will talk to the person at risk to find out what they want to happen and will work with them, together with other services, to agree a plan of action that best meets their needs and wishes.

If you feel an adult is in immediate danger you should contact the police on 999.

More information for professionals:

Response to self-neglect and hoarding

Self-neglect [including hoarding] in some circumstances may be raised as an adult safeguarding concern. However it is usually more likely to be dealt with as an intervention under the parts of the Care Act, dealing with assessment, planning, information and advice, and prevention.

It is vital to establish whether the person has capacity to make decisions about their own wellbeing and whether or not they are able or willing to care for themselves. An adult who is able to make choices may make decisions that others think of as self-neglect.

Given the complex and diverse nature of self-neglect and hoarding, responses by a range of organisations are likely to be more effective than a single agency response with particular reference to housing providers.

It is important to recognise that assessments of self-neglect and hoarding are embedded and influenced by personal, social and cultural values. Staff working with the person at risk should always reflect on how their own values might affect their judgment.

Finding the right balance between respecting the adult's autonomy and meeting the duty to protect their wellbeing may involve building up a rapport with the adult to come to a better understanding about whether self-neglect or hoarding are matters for adult safeguarding or any other kind of intervention.

Crucial to all decision making is a robust risk assessment, preferably multi-agency, that includes the views of the adult and their personal network.

Multi-agency risk management (MRM) protocol

Safeguarding reviews have indicated the need for a risk escalation procedure to respond to concerns about individuals with chaotic lives, complex needs and multiple vulnerabilities.

This has led to the creation of the multi-agency risk management (MRM) protocol which is available on the Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Adults Board website. Click [here](#) to access a copy.

This protocol provides professionals with a framework to facilitate effective multi-agency working with adults who are deemed to have mental capacity, are unwilling to engage and who are at risk of serious harm or death through self-neglect, risk taking behaviour or refusal of services.

Other recommendations from reviews include recognising the importance of involving key family members where appropriate, identifying a named professional who can take responsibility for leading agreed actions, more comprehensive information sharing and reinforcing the need for undertaking and recording formal capacity assessments.

Self-neglect and hoarding: resources

Several self-neglect and hoarding guidance documents and tools have been produced and are available online.

These have been combined into one document which includes:

- **Self-neglect policy**
- **Self-neglect strategy**
- **Hoarding toolkit**
- **Seven minute briefing in self-neglect**
- **Self-neglect screening tool**
- **Self-neglect and hoarding guidance**

To access this resource click [here](#).

Free training

Virtual multi-agency training on self-neglect and hoarding is available for professionals and volunteers working within the Rochdale borough. For further details and to register for a place, click [here](#).