

7 Minute Briefing

Self-neglect

Things to remember

- If a child is in the household, please consult the Right Help Right Time guidance, discuss with a safeguarding lead and refer to MASH where needed on 0300 555 2866.
- Walsall has a Self-Neglect Pathway, which includes a Self-Neglect Assessment Tool which is intended to support multi-agency information sharing and decision making.
- With consent, you can contact GP/District Nurse or other professionals that may be involved and the Local Fire Service for a safe and well visit on 0800 389 5525.
- If you believe the adult has care and support needs and can't protect themselves call the Adults Access team on 0300 555 2922.

Support / Training

Professionals should utilise local partners who may be able to help e.g. RSPCA, the fire service, housing and voluntary organisations. Decluttering and cleaning services and help with property management and repairs may be of benefit to those self-neglecting.

- Have **patience** and gain **trust** from the individual and agree small steps at a time

In terms of practical tasks, risk assessments have effective, multi-agency approaches to assessing and monitoring risk. Professionals should feel competent in applying the Mental Capacity Act in cases of self-neglect or in a minority of cases complete a Mental health assessment.

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" (Care Act, 2014). Characteristics of self-neglect can include:

- Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health, hygiene and safety
- Animal collecting with potential insanitary conditions and neglect of animal needs
- Failure to manage personal affairs such as social contact and finances
- Obsessive hoarding creating fire hazards

Causes

It is not always possible to establish the root cause however self-neglect can be a result of:

- A person's brain injury, dementia or other mental disorder
 - Obsessive compulsive disorder or hoarding disorder
 - Reduced motivation as a side effect of medication
 - Physical illness which has effect on abilities, energy levels, attention span, organisational skills or motivation
- People with mental health problems may display self-neglecting behaviours however there is often an assumption that self-neglecting behaviours indicate a mental health problem – this may not be the case

Approach

Safeguarding duties apply where the adult has care and support needs that means they are unable to protect themselves against self-neglect. In most cases, the intervention should seek to minimise the risk while respecting the individual choices.

Research has shown that approaches such as 'deep cleans' can be deeply upsetting and not useful for the individual.

Good Practice

- **Work with partners** to ensure the right approach for each individual
- Be **person-centered** to respect the views of the individual and work towards outcomes they want
- Be **analytical** to identify underlying causes that help address the issue

Relevant legislation

Self-neglect is included as a category under adult safeguarding in The Care Act (2014) Statutory Guidance. This requires local authorities to make enquiries, or cause others to do so, if it believes an adult is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect. Cases of self-neglect may not prompt a Section 42 enquiry – whether or not a response is required will depend on the adults' ability to protect themselves.