

What is Self-Neglect?

Encompasses a wide range of behaviour – neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. Professionals can find working with people who self-neglect very challenging. The key to effective interventions in self-neglect is building relationships to effectively engage with people without causing distress and reserving use of legal powers to where they are proportionate and essential. Safeguarding processes may be required when working with people that self-neglect, but much of the work will be long-term work, which happens under other frameworks, such as the care management framework.

The pandemic has resulted in there being less opportunities for contact with people who may be struggling. It is therefore even more important that we are aware of the possible signs of self-neglect and how we can support individuals who self-neglect.

SPOTTING SELF-NEGLECT, some possible signs may include the following:

- ❖ A person who self-neglects may live in a very unclean environment, which may be hazardous, for example living with a rodent infestation or living with a completely blocked toilet.
- ❖ A person who self-neglects may have a poor diet and nutrition that may impact on their health and wellbeing. For example, there is little or no fresh food in the fridge, or food is mouldy and very out of date. There may be a financial reason for this.
- ❖ A person who self-neglects may fail to attend important appointments. It is important to consider if the person failed to attend or was not brought.
- ❖ A person who self-neglects may decline necessary support from health and/or social care staff in relation to personal hygiene and care. They may have poor personal hygiene, poor healing of sores, or long toenails.
- ❖ A person who self-neglects may neglect household maintenance, and therefore create hazards or fire risks. For example: rotten floorboards creating trip hazards or lack of boiler or electrical maintenance.
- ❖ Hoarding is associated with self-neglect. A hoarding disorder is where someone acquires an excessive number of items and stores them in a chaotic manner, usually resulting in unmanageable amounts of clutter. When hoarding is identified, risks to both the individual and the public are to be assessed and the appropriate risk management plans put in place.

Working virtually can make identifying self-neglect more difficult, consider if are there other agencies going into an individual's home that could provide information?

Further information to support professionals in identifying and supporting individuals that self-neglect:

- Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Policies and Procedures: <https://www.berkshiresafeguardingadults.co.uk/> (Section 2.6 self-neglect)
- The West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adult Partnership Board has a localised risk management framework which may be appropriate where self-neglect is known or suspected. The risk framework can be found here: <http://www.sabberkshirewest.co.uk/practitioners/supporting-individuals-to-manage-risk-and-multi-agency-framework-marm/>
- Clutter index tool, to support in the identification of hoarding <https://hoardingdisordersuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/clutter-image-ratings.pdf>
- Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service - Safe and Well visits, you can refer vulnerable people for a safe and well visit by a representative from RBFRS. Their home will be assessed for fire risk, with a view to fitting free smoke detector alarms if required. The Fire and Rescue Service will also discuss home escape plans and provide advice to lower fire risk. [Go to the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's website.](#)
- Did not attend appointments/ Was not brought, the Royal Devon & Exeter NHS Foundation Trust have produced an informative video on the possible reasons why vulnerable adults may not attend appointments, encouraging that the term did not attend is replaced with 'was not brought'. The video can be found [here](#).
- React to Red, pressure care awareness: <http://www.sabberkshirewest.co.uk/media/1278/react-to-red-cards-a5.pdf>
- Safeguarding Adults Review 7 Minute Learning Summary Carol: <http://www.sabberkshirewest.co.uk/media/1479/carol-practice-note-v10.pdf>
- Safeguarding Adult Review 7 Minute Learning Summary Paul: <http://www.sabberkshirewest.co.uk/media/1432/paul-practice-note-v10.pdf>
- Practice Note Safeguarding Adult Review Aubrey: <http://www.sabberkshirewest.co.uk/media/1396/practice-note-aubrey-v10.pdf>