

Working with Self Neglect in Sussex

This booklet introduces you to the Sussex Multi Agency Procedures to Support People who Self Neglect (2013). It is relevant to any person working with people who may self neglect, particularly statutory services and partner agencies such as charities, housing providers and the independent social care sector.

This booklet has been produced for training purposes only and is not a substitute for reading the Sussex Self Neglect Procedures.

Translation? Tick this box and take to any council office.

- ترجمة؟ ضع علامة في المربع وخذها إلى مكتب البلدية. Arabic
- অনুবাদ? বক্সে টিক চিহ্ন দিয়ে কাউন্সিল অফিসে নিয়ে যান। Bengali
- 需要翻譯? 請在這方格內加剔, 並送回任何市議會的辦事處。Cantonese
- ترجمه؟ لطفاً این مربع را علامتگذاری نموده و آن را به هر یک از دفاتر شهرداری ارائه نمایید. Farsi
- Traduction? Veuillez cocher la case et apporter au council. French
- 需要翻譯? 請在這方格內划勾, 并送回任何市议会的办事处。Mandarin
- Źłmaczenie? Zaznacz to okienko i zwróć do któregokolwiek biura samorządu lokalnego (council office). Polish
- Tradução? Coloque um visto na quadrícula e leve a uma qualquer repartição de poder local (council office). Portuguese
- Tercümesi için kareyi işaretleyiniz ve bir semt belediye burosuna veriniz Turkish
- other (please state)

This can also be made available in large print, Braille, or on CD or audio tape

The booklet looks at

- **What is self neglect?**
- **What are the signs of self neglect?**
- **What do I do if I think a person is self neglecting?**

Working with self neglect is one of the most difficult and challenging areas of work faced by professionals.

Reading this booklet will introduce you to the Sussex Self Neglect Procedures produced to support professionals and clarify their role dealing with this difficult issue.

The Sussex Self Neglect Procedures have been endorsed by Brighton & Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Boards. The Boards and their Chairs support this multi agency approach to support the prevention of harm to those at risk from self neglect, and to the local community.

What is self neglect?

Self-neglect is: the inability (intentional or non intentional) to maintain a socially and culturally accepted standard of self-care with the potential for serious consequences to the health and well-being of the self-neglecters [people who self neglect] and perhaps even to their community. (Gibbons, 2006).

An individual may be considered as self-neglecting and therefore maybe at risk of harm where they are:

- either unable, or unwilling to provide adequate care for themselves;
- unable or unwilling to obtain necessary care to meet their needs; and/or
- declining essential support without which their health and safety needs cannot be met.

How do you recognise self neglect?

You may know that you are already working with people who self neglect. Even if you haven't yet directly worked with people who self neglect you may have seen TV or news items covering related issues e.g. people who have died in concerning conditions, or as

a result of untreated infections, as well as programmes on the related issue of hoarding. People who hoard do not always self neglect and vice versa. The list below, taken from the Self Neglect Procedures, contains some of the indicators of self neglect:

- living in very unclean environment for example rodent infestation or living with a toilet completely blocked with faeces;
- neglecting household maintenance, and therefore creating hazards or fire risks for example rotten floorboards creating trip hazards; or lack of boiler or electrical maintenance;
- having eccentric behaviour/ lifestyles, such as obsessive hoarding;
- poor diet and nutrition. For example, there is little or no fresh food in the fridge, or food is mouldy and very out of date;
- refusing necessary help from health and / or social care staff in relation to personal hygiene and care;
- having poor personal hygiene, poor healing / sores, long toe nails;

Working with self neglect can be a complex, potentially challenging and distressing area for professionals, and those affected by it. It is particularly difficult when a person has mental capacity and is refusing services. The procedures will apply when you are working with a person identified at risk of harm through self neglect.

Recognising Self Neglect

Mary lives by herself having little contact with family, and no known professional support network.

Mary's Housing Officer has noticed that her home has become littered with empty alcohol bottles and broken glass causing her to stumble and fall. She appears unkempt, withdrawn and avoids contact with anyone. The Housing Officer has noticed that she has visibly lost weight.

Due to poor mobility Mary can't always make it to the

bathroom and there is a strong smell of urine and faeces in her flat, about which neighbours have complained.

Mary's boiler is not working, so she has no heating or hot water, and she will not agree to allowing the boiler to be serviced or have a safety inspection. She is also at risk of eviction for rent arrears.

The Housing Officer has made a number of attempts to talk with Mary about support, but Mary consistently declines, saying she is fine and doesn't need help from anybody. The Housing Officer is concerned about Mary's well being, and discusses these concerns with her manager.

What do I do if I am concerned about someone?

If you become aware that a person is self neglecting and appropriate steps are not taken to respond, there is a real risk of the situation worsening and may eventually result in permanent damage to a person's mental or physical health or even death.

If there are immediate serious risks to life and limb, you should consider if it is necessary to call emergency services (eg ambulance) and any other immediate actions required to minimise the risk to the individual or others.

If you work in health or social care or any other agency or professional group with an obligation under safeguarding you have a positive obligation to report any issues of self neglect that you may come across to the appropriate agency. The purpose of reporting issues is to ensure there is a co-ordinated response to serious risks identified for a person who is self-neglecting.

Addressing Self Neglect – Multi Agency approach

A multi agency meeting was convened, instigated by the Housing Team.

It was attended by Mary's GP and representatives from Adult Social Care, Housing and Health.

It was a challenging meeting for all involved because actions had to balance Mary's wish not to accept support with professionals' real concerns about her well being and the safety of her neighbours.

The meeting shared information and agreed an initial plan which would be reviewed in the near future to reassess the concerns.

Mary has begun to accept some visits from a female Tenancy Sustainment Officer as she has started to understand there is a risk of losing her home. The Tenancy Sustainment Officer has started to build

rapport with Mary, who is now accepting help with her monies so she can regularly pay her rent. However, Mary continues to be cautious about allowing her boiler to be repaired.

The meeting is to be reconvened prior to winter to consider the additional risks of Mary still not having heat or hot water.

How do I report suspected self neglect?

If you are concerned about someone who may be at risk of harm from self neglect you should gather as much information as possible, including, if known, clear immediate risks;

Information should include if known:

- Persons name
- Contact details
- What are the risks and concerns
- State of property, including risk of fire

- Appearance of person (including clothing, weight, personal hygiene)
- Health concerns (physical and/or mental)
- Any concerns about the persons mental capacity
- Any animals
- Any history known about person including;
- Social networks
- Carers
- Family
- Details of previous /attempts to work with the person
- Refusals of help
- If person is aware you are contacting a service

There are a number of agencies that concerns about self neglect can be reported to. The procedures indicate several organisations can take the lead in such cases, and co-ordinate a response. If you are unsure who the lead organisation is you should contact the following services in the first instance.

For Brighton & Hove, contact

The Access Point Team

accesspoint@brighton-hove.gov.uk
01273 295555

For East Sussex, contact

Social Care Direct
0345 60 80 191

For West Sussex, contact

Contact Centre on 01243 642 555

References

Braye, S., Orr D., and Preston-Shoot, M. (2011) 'Self-Neglect and adult safeguarding: findings from research.' Department of Health report. Social Care Institute for Excellence.

Gibbons, S.W. (2007) 'Characteristics and behaviours of self-neglect among community dwelling older adults', Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, vol 67 no 12-B

Day, R.M. and Leahy-Warren, P. (2008) 'Self-Neglect1: Recognising features and Risk Factors', Nursing Times, Vol104. No24.

Flynn, M. (2009) 'Sheffield Adults Safeguarding Partnership Board: Serious Case Review re 'Ann' <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/caresupport/adult/adult-abuse/partnership/serious-case-reviews.html>