

Safeguarding Factsheet 3: Self-neglect and Hoarding

The basics

There is no single operational definition of self-neglect. The Department of Health (2016), defines it as, '... a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding'.

Skills for Care provided a framework for research into self-neglect identifying three distinct areas that are characteristic of self-neglect:

- Lack of self-care - this includes neglect of one's personal hygiene, nutrition and hydration, or health, to an extent that may endanger safety or wellbeing
- Lack of care of one's environment - this includes situations that may lead to domestic squalor or elevated levels of risk in the domestic environment (e.g., health or fire risks caused by hoarding)
- Refusal of assistance that might alleviate these issues. This might include, for example, refusal of care services in either their home or a care environment or of health assessments or interventions, even if previously agreed, which could potentially improve self-care or care of one's environment.

Self-neglect

Self-neglect is a behavioural condition in which an individual neglects to attend to their basic needs such as personal hygiene, or tending appropriately to any medical conditions, or keeping their environment safe to carry out what is seen as usual activities of daily living. It can occur as a result of mental health issues, personality disorders, substance abuse, dementia, advancing age, social isolation, and cognitive impairment or through personal choice.

It can be triggered by trauma and significant life events and can affect people from all backgrounds.

Hoarding

Hoarding does not fall under adult safeguarding but it could be considered as safeguarding in the wider sense under the umbrella of prevention. Most people associate hoarding with the acquisition of items with an associated inability to discard things that have little or no value (in the opinions of others) to the point where it interferes with use of living space or activities of daily living.

Compulsive hoarding (more accurately described as 'hoarding disorder') is a pattern of behaviour characterised by the excessive acquisition of and inability or unwillingness to discard large quantities of objects that cover the living areas of the home and cause significant distress. Compulsive hoarders may be conscious of their irrational behaviour but the emotional attachment to the hoarded objects far exceeds the motivation to discard the items.

More Information

Help, support and further information is available at [Hoarding UK](#) - the UK national charity for people impacted by hoarding behaviours

[Hoarding UK - The Basics](#)

Information for Professionals

[Self-neglect Kirklees Multi-agency policy and practice guidance](#)

[Multi-Agency Hoarding Framework Guidance for Practitioners in Kirklees](#)