Self Neglect Learning Briefing

What is Self-Neglect?

Self-neglect can describe a wide range of situations or behaviors. It could be someone not looking after their own health or personal care or not maintaining a home environment for so long that it becomes cluttered or dirty.

The Care Act recognises self-neglect as a category of abuse & emphasises the importance of working together & preventative actions to minimise risk.

The need for safeguarding processes is dependent on risk levels. Lower levels of risk, could be addressed by:

- Care Act assessment
- signposting to alternative support
- arranging mental health &/or health support

Safeguarding processes may be required if there are significant risks, such as:

- Risk of life-threatening consequences e.g., fire risk, substance misuse, self-harm
- Risk to tenancy or home security
- Non-engagement with essential treatment or support
- being vulnerable to exploitation or domestic abuse
- Environment presents high risks, such as inadequate plumbing, washing or toileting facilities
- Little/no informal support networks

What are the possible signs of Self-Neglect?

- Excessively unclean/cluttered home, signs of vermin, hoarding
- Neglecting household maintenance
- Unkempt personal appearance, malnutrition, dehydration
- Declining essential health or social care support
- Financial debt issues

What are the possible reasons for Self-Neglect?

- Physical/mental health problems, substance misuse
- Psychological & social factors
- Diminished social networks
- Traumatic histories & life-changing events

What have Safeguarding Adult Reviews told us?

Importance of:

- Information sharing & collaborative working
- Robust face to face assessment/risk assessment
- Understanding of legislation e.g., Mental Capacity Act
- Challenging & reflect on practice
- Robust guidance to assist practitioners
- Assessment processes involve carers/significant others

What is the self-neglect process in West Sussex?

1: Self-neglecting identified, consider

- Immediate actions required to minimise risk
- Raising a safeguarding concern or requesting a social care assessment, and/or;
- Arranging a multi-agency meeting.

2: Identify lead agency

If there is a Safeguarding Enquiry, this will be the Local Authority. In other cases, this could be another agency because:

- The agency is already involved
- The agency has a duty of care
- The agency holds significant information
- The individual has shown a likelihood to engage with them and /or
- Needs appear to relate to the service provided by that agency

3: Lead agency co-ordinates information gathering

Consideration of the most appropriate actions to address the concerns raised, & initial considerations about the adult's mental capacity.

4: Multi-agency meeting

Lead agency convenes a meeting under the self-neglect procedures to:

- Consider risks & issues of mental capacity
- Share information between agencies
- Devise a shared action plan

Lead agency involves the adult concerned as much as possible &/or their representative/advocate.

5: Comprehensive assessment of risk

Outcomes are determined & risk addressed, resulting in:

- Support accepted
- Ongoing monitoring

Outcomes are determined & risk remains, resulting in:

- Escalation (to risk panels if available/senior managers/legal services)/ongoing monitoring
- Repeat multi-agency meetings
- Safeguarding concern raised where required

For full details, further advice & guidance please see Self-Neglect Briefing Note, Pan-Sussex Multi-Agency Procedure & listen to our Self-Neglect Podcast.

Resources you can use to ensure your practice is current:

- Mental Capacity Act
- Care Act
- Pan-Sussex Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Professional Curiosity Learning Briefing
- WSSAB Threshold Guidance
- Pan- Sussex Information Sharing Protocol
- Making Safeguarding Personal Learning Briefing

For cases where an individual is putting themselves or others at significant risk by refusing services and all options have been explored and, the level of risk is still high, a referral to MARM should be considered.