Essex County Council

Self-Neglect and Hoarding

Craig Mitchell

Introduction

Learning from working with people who hoard.



Hoarding is a prevalent and a complex issue



Accordingly organisations need to work together to achieve specialist outcomes for people.



How can we improve the support we offer to people.

Why are we Talking about Hoarding?

"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. The items can be of little or no monetary value". Hoarding disorder - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

Hoarding is highly prevalent (approximately 2-5% of the population – that is potentially between 1.3 – 3.3 million people in the UK alone) and when severe, is associated with substantial functional disability and represents a great burden for the sufferers, their families and society. *Help For Hoarders – Help for compulsive hoarders and their families*

The Care and Support Statutory Guidance to the Care Act (2014) defines self-neglect as a situation, "Where someone demonstrates lack of care for themselves and or their environment and refuses assistance or services. It can be longstanding or recent. This includes behaviour such as Hoarding".

Types of Hoarding

Animal Hoarding

This is on the increase and often accompanied with the inability to provide minimal standards of care. The hoarder is unable to recognise that the animals are at risk because they feel they are saving them. The homes of animal hoarders are often eventually destroyed by the accumulation of animal faeces and infestation by insects.

Digital Hoarding

This is a relatively new phenomenon. It could present with the storage of data collection equipment such as computers, electronic storage devices or paper. A need to store copies of emails, and other information in an electronic format.

Inanimate objects

This is the most common. This could consist of one type of object or collection of a mixture of objects, such as old clothes, newspapers, food, containers or papers.

Self Neglect Safeguarding Concerns in Essex

In the past 12 months there have been 2,826 self-neglect enquiries raised, impacting 1,420 different adults.

Team	Self neglect	Adults
County Wide	28	20
Mid	567	291
North	1142	526
South East	222	113
South West	407	229
West	460	243
Grand Total	**2826**	**1420**

Key Considerations

Mental Capacity

Safeguarding

Importance of working together

Working Together

Essex Safeguarding adults board states

“a coordinated response with a person-centred approach will lead to improved outcomes”.

We can share information with the persons consent or through section 42 safeguarding in accordance with the Care Act.

MDT approach enables professionals to review individuals views and wishes

Develop an Action Plan

Discuss and reassess risk

Table Exercises

Exercise 1: Mr A is 72 years old, lives alone, is presumed to have capacity, and has severe hoarding throughout his property. There are blocked exits, fire risks, and concerns about personal hygiene. He refuses support from Adult Social Care and declines attempts by the care agency to help clear the property.

Discussion Questions

What are the responsibilities of the care agency?

What are your options?

What consideration should be given to his capacity?

At what point should safeguarding processes be considered?

Exercise 2: A domiciliary care worker visits Mrs B three times a week. Over several months they observe increasing levels of hoarding, spoiled food, growing social isolation, and deterioration in self-care. Each concern is recorded in daily notes but has not been escalated.

A hospital admission following a fall highlights the extent of the self-neglect.

Discussion Questions

What information could have been shared and when?

How can escalation processes be improved?

How can communication between agencies and ASC become more proactive?

What barriers prevent effective information sharing?

Exercise 3: Mrs C has longstanding self-neglect behaviours. Previous interventions have focused on property clearances which were unsuccessful. Within six months the home returned to its previous condition. A multi-agency meeting is being held to develop a different approach.

Discussion Questions

Why might previous interventions not been successful?

How can services adopt a person-centred approach?

What strengths does the individual have?

What community resources could support change?

How do we measure success beyond simply reducing clutter?

Resources

Essex Safeguarding Adults Board

ESAB has a SET Self-Neglect Guidance document and a range of supporting tools to assist practitioners in assessing and managing self-neglect concerns. The Safeguarding Decision Support Framework informs professional judgement and support decision-making about when a safeguarding concern should be raised.



This guidance provides a multi-agency framework for supporting adults who self-neglect or hoard, promoting early intervention, person-centred safeguarding, risk assessment, mental capacity considerations, information sharing, and coordinated action to reduce harm while respecting autonomy and legal rights.

North Self Neglect and Hoarding Forum

- **North Self-neglect and Hoarding Forum has been live since 2022, and is continuing to grow and is looking for new referrals and members.**

- **The Monthly MDT meet on the first Wednesday of each month and has successfully supported adults to maintain independence, stay in their homes and return home from residential care homes.**

It is attended by services

- **Adult Social Care – Social worker / Occupational Therapist**
- **Essex Fire Service**
- **Essex Police**
- **Colchester Borough Homes**
- **Colchester Borough Council**
- **Community 360**
- **Tendring Voluntary Service**
- **Community Agents**
- **Tendring District Council**

Self neglect and haording Criteria

The Care Act states **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".***

You do not need the persons consent to refer to the North Forum, if the person meets the criteria in accordance with the Care Act for safeguarding; or if it is assessed they will likely meet the safeguarding criteria in the future if no support is offered.

If you identify a person needs a deep clean, refer to the forum to see what support can be provided by the MDT.

All originations can refer to the MDT using the North Hoarding referral form.
If you have any questions / or need further information please do not hesitate to contact the North Hoarding MDT north.hoarding@essex.gov.uk.

Feedback From Cases Presented to the Forum

Increased multi-agency agency working	Empowered people to leave residential care with no formal services	Enabled them to maintain their tenancy	Engage people with community services
Increased Income	Improved Well-being and outcomes	Enabled essential works and equipment to be installed	Safer home environment reducing mold

Essex County Council

