



An Oifig Náisiúnta um Chumhdach

Ospidéal Naomh Iósaf

Sráid Mulgrave

Luimneach

V94 C8DV

T: 061 461165 R: safeguarding.socialcare@hse.ie

National Safeguarding Office,

South East Wing,

St Joseph's Hospital, Mulgrave Street

Limerick.

V94 C8DV

T: 061 461165 E: safeguarding.socialcare@hse.ie

5/07/2023

Róisín Shortall TD
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2
E: roisin.shortall@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Shortall,

PQ Number: PQ 27022/23

To ask the Minister for Health the services available to assist where persons are concerned with another person's serious self-neglect which may be a danger to themselves or others and where the HSE safeguarding and protection teams confirm that they do not have a role in safeguarding if there is no third-party causing harm to the person in question (details supplied); who has responsibility for providing such a service; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

The Health Service Executive is committed to the protection of vulnerable persons who experience neglect as well as responding to situations where adults deemed vulnerable experience self-neglect. Responding to cases of self-neglect poses many challenges. In line with the principles of assisted decision-making legislation, the presumption of capacity and the right to self-determination underpin thinking so that people have rights regarding how they wish to live their life. However, the seriousness of this issue lies in the recognition that self-neglect in vulnerable persons is often not just a personal



National Safeguarding Office

preference or a behavioural idiosyncrasy, but a spectrum of behaviours associated with increased morbidity, mortality and impairments in activities of daily living.

Since 2014, the HSE has had a policy on self-neglect. The purpose of this policy (as outlined in a section of the Safeguarding Vulnerable persons at Risk of Abuse, National Policy and Procedures, 2014) is to offer guidance to staff of the HSE (and HSE funded services) who become aware of concerns regarding extreme self-neglect on how such cases may be managed. It also offers guidance to Safeguarding and Protection Teams when referrals are received or where advice and support is sought. Cases of self-neglect may require multi-disciplinary and/or multi-agency involvement.

The policy outlines a number of helpful principles;

- Self-neglect occurs across the life span.
- There is a danger in targeting vulnerable persons and the decisions they make about lifestyle, which society may find unacceptable.
- The definition of self-neglect is based on cultural understandings and challenges cultural values of cleanliness, hygiene and care.
- A threshold needs to be exceeded before the label of self-neglect is attached – many common behaviours do not result in action by social or health services or the courts.
- Distinguish between self-neglect, which involves personal care, and neglect of the environment, manifested in squalor and hoarding behaviour.
- Recognition of the community aspects or dimensions rather than just an individualistic focus on capacity and choice: some self-neglecting behaviour can have a serious impact on family, neighbours and surroundings.
- Importance of protection from harm and not just 'non- interference' in cases of refusal of services. Building trust and negotiation is critical for successful intervention.
- Interventions need to be informed by the vulnerable person's beliefs regarding the stress experienced by care givers, including family members, and must address the underlying causes.
- Assumptions must not be made regarding lack of mental capacity and, as far as possible, people must be supported in making their own decisions

The policy requires that the professional/service receiving the report will begin the process of preliminary assessment on receipt of a report of concern about a vulnerable person neglecting themselves. As far as possible and appropriate the Safeguarding and Protection Team will support professionals and services in undertaking assessment and intervention. The policy goes on to give advice on the assessment process and the importance of a lead person being nominated to act as coordinator of information and interventions. It details that the responsibility for identifying such a lead person lies with the manager in the service or area involved. In these circumstances, the Safeguarding and Protection Team is available to provide advice and support as appropriate.



An Oifig Náisiúnta um Chumhdach

Ospidéal Naomh Iósaf

Sráid Mulgrave

Luimneach

V94 C8DV

T: 061 461165 R: safeguarding.socialcare@hse.ie

National Safeguarding Office,

South East Wing,

St Joseph's Hospital, Mulgrave Street

Limerick.

V94 C8DV

T: 061 461165 E: safeguarding.socialcare@hse.ie

The policy reflects the importance of multi-disciplinary and inter-agency cooperation which is critical in the response to concerns of self neglect. Safeguarding and Protection teams do accept extreme self-neglect referrals in circumstances where no other services are involved with the vulnerable adult and these cases are reflected in the annual reports published by the National Safeguarding Office.

Yours Sincerely,

Tim Hanly

General Manager | National Safeguarding Office

Copy to HSE PAD at PQuestions@hse.ie



National Safeguarding Office