

Practitioner Learning Brief

Adult Self Neglect - Engaging Family & Friends

Why is it important?

Supporting vulnerable adults who self-neglect can be extremely challenging especially where they may refuse support or fail to acknowledge the problem and there are limitations to what others can do if the adult has mental capacity to make their own decisions. Options for intervention with adults who intentionally self-neglect can be limited and a lack of resources can sometimes prevent appropriate service responses.

Often adults who self neglect have chaotic lifestyles and may only have the support of professionals. They may feel that they are supported by people who are in similar situations to them, but this often isn't always helpful, especially if they are influencing their drug or alcohol misuse in a negative way.

To allow individuals to thrive it is important to help them build healthy relationships with family members and people who can provide them positive support. Being loved and cared for is a basic need and supporting individuals to build relationships with family members who can do this is an important part of their care.

An effective approach to working with adults who self-neglect could include contact with their family. This must be with the adult's consent, but if agreed, engaging with family or friends in the ways indicated in this brief can lead to the provision of additional support. This was highlighted as a possible protective factor in a recent [Safeguarding Adult Review](#). If the adult does not consent it is still appropriate to signpost and provide general information and sources of support without providing specific details of the person being supported.

What to consider?

Use a Person Centred Approach

- Ask the person you are supporting about their family and other people they are close to
- Find out what kind of relationship they have with them ?
- What are the family members lives like ie. do they work, do they have other family/caring commitments?
- How often do they have contact with them?

Build Relationships with Supportive Family Members

- Find out how much they would like to be involved?
- What type of contact they would like?
- What support are they able to provide (if any)?
- Reassure them that whatever level of involvement that they want is OK.
- Acknowledge that having a family member who has a chaotic lifestyle can be really distressing for the person trying to support them and it can also be really tiring where their support often goes unappreciated or not recognised
- Regularly ask family members if they feel listened and heard.

Utilise family involvement to inform the support that you offer to individuals

- Ask family members more about the background and life of the person you are supporting and factors that could have led to their current situation.
- If a family member does have contact with the person you are supporting encourage them to share any concerns they have. Professionals working with the adult then has an idea of what could be going on and can provide more support at that time.

Ten Practical Steps To Take To Build Relationships When Engaging Family and Friends

1. Provide opportunities for the family member to be involved eg. invite them to meetings, including [Multi Agency Risk Management Meetings \(MRM\)](#) and have meetings at a time they can attend, share minutes and actions with them if they are unable to attend
2. Provide family members with information about the needs of the person that you are supporting eg. information about how drug misuse affects people
3. Share positive news with family members about the person you are supporting. Share small achievements and improvements they have made rather than only keeping family members up to date or contacting them when something negative has occurred.
4. Whatever level of involvement a family member has provide them with your mobile number rather than a central switchboard number so that they can easily reach you and consider using text messages instead of phone calls if. It may be easier for the family member to respond if they are upset about their family member's situation.
5. Use the Hardship Fund to provide vouchers for shopping to family members who are carers
6. Signpost them to support for Carers eg. [The Carers' Resource \(rochdale.gov.uk\)](#), [ROAR Rochdale and Oldham Drug & Alcohol | Turning Point \(turning-point.co.uk\)](#), [Help for families | Adfam](#)
7. Ask the person you are supporting how much information they want to be shared with a family member ie. what level of detail are they happy to be shared.
8. Using the Christmas Toy Appeal to provide presents to the person you are supporting, which they can then give to children who live with family members without it costing them money
9. Help the person you support to remember things like birthdays and important occasions, so that they can build that connection with their family member and help the family member to feel like what they do is 'not for nothing' and is appreciated.
10. Ask other organisations that work with the individual if they have contact with family members. Sometimes an individual you are supporting could be saying that they don't have support from a family member, but actually that family member, unknown to you, is in contact with another organisation and does care.