

Self-Neglect

What is self-neglect:

A person may not be keeping themselves clean, neglecting to care for their own health or their surroundings, may refuse care or treatment for health and care needs, or medications. They could be neglecting their living areas to the point of being at risk. The person may be unable to manage their personal or household affairs, e.g. debt and bills, tenancy, pet care, care of others. (Think Family, intergenerational or household risks)

Why it matters:

The underlying reasons for self-neglect can be complex and may have an impact on the person's health, wellbeing or living conditions. Without timely intervention, existing health problems may worsen. Neglect of personal hygiene may mean that the person experiences social difficulties and isolation or physical/mental health breakdown. A person's wellbeing may be at risk. In extreme situations the person's vital interest may also be at risk.

Self-neglect may be the result of:

- Traumatic life history
- Loss, or diminished support network
- Physical illness, or disability impacting on a person's motivation or sense of priority
- An underlying health matter, e.g. brain injury, mental disorder, dementia
- Substance misuse, or side effects of new medications



Capacity:

When an adult at risk refuses to engage and appears to be at risk of serious harm a detailed and specific capacity assessment of both decision making and executive functioning is crucial in establishing how best to intervene. A capacity assessment in these circumstances may not be a one-off event but a series of repeated assessments to understand an individual's ability to make informed decisions and to implement these effectively.

Effective multiagency working:

Self-neglect can be both complex and challenging. Research has indicated that short term fixes, and onward referral mechanisms are ineffective and that solutions lie in longer term relationship-based practice. In complex cases the ongoing commitment of multiagency partners forming a team around the adult can yield positive results. The carefully considered inclusion of family and friends can also have positive effect.

Need to know:

- There does not need to be evidence of hoarding for person to be considered under self-neglect procedures. There is a separate 7-minute briefing for Hoarding.
- If the person is accepting of assessments, support, care – then they are NOT at risk of self-neglect.

Look out for:

- Rotting food, inadequate food in household
- Weight loss
- Smells emanating from person or home
- Skin rashes or pressure damage
- Dirty hair, nails, clothing
- Household disrepair
- Human or animal faeces
- Disorientation. Confusion or behaviour changes