



Self-Neglect 1 Minute Briefing

SELF-NEGLECT AND ENGAGEMENT

This briefing is part of a series on self-neglect. Each briefing should be read alongside the Southampton Safeguarding Adults Board multi-agency policy, procedures, and practice guidance.

THE ISSUE

The [Care Act 2014](#) incorporated self-neglect as an abuse category, recognising that self-neglect is a safeguarding concern for those adults in receipt of, or in need of care and support, when their health and well-being is being seriously compromised.

There are many reasons why an individual may self-neglect, including previous trauma, enduring and deteriorating physical and/or mental health conditions e.g. dementia, and addictions.

Individuals who self-neglect often decline support and may not identify that they need support. There may be a limit to what professionals and family, friends and neighbours can do, if the adult is deemed to have mental capacity regarding how they live.

REASONS WHY ENGAGEMENT MAY TAKE MORE TIME

- The person may be embarrassed to have visitors and withdraw from family, friends, their community and professionals, becoming socially isolated.
- Anxiety, shame, and fear can be contributory factors to refusing to engage and sustaining engagement with professionals and others.
- Refusal of support may be for many different reasons, but if there are concerns, it is important not to walk away.
- The person may have an excessive attachment to possessions, or be a rescuer of animals, due to issues with emotional attachment which can relate to previous trauma.
- The person may have lived in a particular way for many years, with deteriorating health exacerbating the risks to themselves and others.
- Anti-social behaviour.
- Mental health issues



A TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

- Confirm with the person their preferred form of communication.
- Understand it may take time to develop rapport and trust: talking about the person's interests and what is important to them at their pace, is the first step.
- Promote consistency where possible: time limited work and short-term interventions are proven not to work.
- Be person-led: the person's wishes should always be considered, in line with risk thresholds and assessment of any immediate risk to the person or others.
- Be respectful.
- Understanding a person's journey can help them and you, identify, how they can be best supported.
- Use the Mental Capacity Act 2005 to empower and support with decision making.
- Consider how and where you engage with the individual, could using a neutral location support more positive engagement?



ENGAGEMENT & RISK



Communicate about risk openly and honestly with the person and all involved.

Build rapport and relationship of trust with the adult. Try to understand their meaning of self-neglect in the context of their life history.

The autonomy of an adult with capacity should be respected, including their right to make what others might consider to be an unwise decision. However, this does not mean the outcome should be no further action. Sustaining engagement is key.

Is there a contingency plan in place: if needs change/ risks increase, coordinate with the person and the agencies working with them.

Ensure there is a multi-agency approach and meeting(s) so that risk is a shared responsibility. This may be under safeguarding procedures, depending on the level of risk.

If the person is not seen or professionals lose contact, consider at the planning stage, what is the escalation plan/risks?

Identify clear referral routes.

Have systems in place to ensure co-ordination and shared risk between agencies.

Be mindful of the 'perfect storm'; a person's reluctance to engage alongside an organisation being stretched for resources, can lead to unmanaged risk.

Use creative and flexible aspirations, including family members and community resources.





TEAM AROUND THE PERSON



- Where possible, identify a professional(s) who will take the lead.
- Identify who is providing informal support and whether they can continue to provide this: sometimes assumptions are made about what support is being provided, when it is not, or circumstances may have changed.
- It is important that professionals offer flexible and creative solutions which will promote engagement.
- Be empathic and non-judgemental.
- Be tenacious in your engagement. It may take a long time to develop trust.

LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION

Local Self-Neglect Guidance

- [4LSAB Guidance on responding to self-neglect and persistent welfare concerns.](#)
- [4LSAB Self-Neglect Learning Briefing](#)
- [One Minute Guide to Self-Neglect](#)

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- [Self-Neglect At A Glance](#)

With thanks to Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board and

