



Recognising Self-neglect

The Care Act 2014 Statutory Guidance defines that self-neglect is a “wide range of behaviours” including “neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings” and can include certain behaviours such as “hoarding”. Often this is a situation in which someone demonstrates a “lack of care for themselves and or their environment and refuses assistance or services”.

Types of Self-neglect

- Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety
- Neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, nutrition, health or surroundings, leading to increased risk of fire due to hoarding.
- Failure to seek help or access services including non-attendance at appointments

Indicators of Self-neglect

- Very poor personal hygiene,
- Unkempt appearance, lack of appropriate clothing
- Malnutrition/dehydration, lack of essential food
- Living in hoarding, squalid or unsanitary living conditions, neglecting household maintenance
- Collecting a large number of animals in inappropriate conditions
- Non-compliance with health or care services, inability or unwillingness to take medication or treat illness or injury

Things to consider - be professionally curious

- What is the adults view of the neglect, do they recognise it, see it as a risk?
- Is this a long-established behaviour or a recent decline as a response to a change in life, trauma, relationship breakdown, coping mechanism, etc.
- What strengths does the person have – what are they managing well and how can this be built on? What motivation for change does the person have?
- Are there links between the self-neglect and health, disability, substance use or the person’s life history, family or social relations?
- Self neglect behaviours maybe hidden for years and therefore agencies may only become aware when risks have increased.

Reasons for self-neglect

- Self-neglect can be a result of a diverse range of issues and challenges faced by individuals, so it is important to look at the neglect or hoarding in the context of the individual’s life.
- Often the reasons for the self-neglect have stemmed from problems such as health difficulties, injury, trauma, homelessness, loss or social isolation.
- The Care Act Statutory Guidance 2023 recognises it can be difficult to distinguish between whether a person is making a capacitated choice to live in a particular way (which may be described as an unwise choice or decision) or whether: The person lacks mental capacity to make the decision; or there is concern regarding the adult’s ability to protect themselves by controlling their own behaviour.
- Consider if the person has the functional capacity to make a particular decision and executive capacity which is the ability to carry out the decision.

Multi-Agency Roles and Responsibilities

- Successful intervention is more likely when different services work together to identify solutions and look at a person's needs/risks as a whole. While things like cleaning interventions may provide a short-term solution to self-neglect and/or hoarding, longer-term solutions should be sought as part of an integrated multi-agency plan.
- The aim is to prevent serious injury or death of the individuals by ensuring that:
 - The person is empowered as far as possible to make their own decisions and to make changes to their circumstances that lead to positive outcomes
 - There is a shared, multi-agency understanding and recognition of issues
 - There is effective and practical multi-agency working, which challenges practice and ensures that concerns/risks receive appropriate prioritisation
 - There is a proportionate response to the level of risk to self and others

Raising a Safeguarding Concern

Make a Safeguarding Referral to Local Authority detailing concerns – click links below to take you to safeguarding adult contact information for the individual 4LSAB areas:

[Southampton](#)

[Portsmouth](#)

[Isle of Wight](#)

[Hampshire](#)

Useful Links

- [4LSAB Multi-Agency Guidance on Responding to Self-Neglect](#)
- [Multi-agency Hoarding Guidance 2022](#)
- [4LSAB Multi-Agency Safeguarding Adults Escalation Protocol](#)
- [4LSAB 7-Minute Guide to Professional Curiosity](#)
- [4LSAB Multi-Agency Risk Management Framework](#)

Language and Engagement

- Language (both that which is written and spoken) used by professionals about individuals who self neglect should be respectful of the person, not judgemental, and should also follow Making Safeguarding Personal principles.
- Using positive, respectful language can build trust and lead to better outcomes for the individual, as they are more likely to engage with any suggested changes, services or interventions.
- Individuals who self-neglect often decline support and may not identify that they need support. Due to the nature of self-neglect, be mindful that engagement may take time and fluctuate.