



Self-Neglect 1 Minute Briefing

A GUIDE TO TRAUMA

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](#) recognises self-neglect as a category of abuse and neglect. This means that self-neglect is a safeguarding concern for those adults in receipt of, or in need of care and support, when their health and wellbeing is being seriously compromised.

Self-neglect is a complex area with a range of causes. It may involve hoarding, neglect of personal care and/or concerns in relation to the living environment.

Research has shown that trauma can impact on a person's ability to cope, their sense of safety, ability to self-regulate, sense of self, perception of control and interpersonal relationships.

Trauma can occur at any age and unless managed effectively can result in long-lasting harm. Trauma-informed practice aims to increase practitioner awareness of the impact of trauma on both individuals and communities.

Multiple Safeguarding Adult Reviews have identified that childhood and adult trauma can have a significant impact on a person's ability to thrive.

UNDERSTANDING ADVERSITY AND TRAUMA

Adversity and trauma affect all of us. Not everyone who has experienced adversity will become known to services, but those who require support are more likely to have experienced adversity and trauma.

Adversity can be a single event, or prolonged threats to, and breaches of a person's safety, security, trust or bodily integrity." (Young Minds 2021)

Trauma is not what happens to you, it is what happens inside of you as a result of what happened to you. Nothing overtly dramatic needs to happen to induce trauma: it is sufficient that they are wounded without an immediate capacity to heal the wound. (Dr Gabor Mate).

Examples of adversity and trauma:

- Experiencing abuse or neglect as a child or adult
- Childhood trauma
- Job loss
- Bereavement, grief and survivorship
- Household/family adversity - substance use, homelessness, poverty, family breakdown, divorce
- Forced imprisonment or institutionalisation
- Experiencing prejudice
- Experience of childhood exploitation
- Adjustment moving to a new area, seeking asylum
- Exposure to war





THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA

- Trauma may result from a single event or multiple events, or a sustained event(s).
- Trauma can influence the way a person relates to their situation and to others.
- Substance use, mental ill health, homelessness, self-harm, domestic abuse, or being in the criminal justice system may all contribute to trauma experienced by an individual.
- For a person who has experienced trauma, a lack of supportive relationships can result in emotional and learning difficulties, engagement in health-harming behaviour, experience of ill health, disrupted nervous, hormonal, and immune systems, being involved in violence, or a victim or survivor of violence.
- Experience of trauma can manifest in many ways, including angry outbursts, distrust, anxiety, poor impulse control, hypervigilance, feelings of guilt and shame or perceived hostility in others.

CONSIDER THE APPROACH

- Professionals need to pause and consider the impact of trauma on the lives of those we work with.
- Consider whether a different approach needs to be taken. Be aware of the potential for re-traumatisation.
- How might we be perceived: could it be considered judgemental, removed, authoritative?
- Without the right support, trauma can have enduring negative effects on a person's physical and mental health and well-being and their life outcomes.

THE SIX PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE

- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment
- Cultural consideration

HM Government (2022) Working definition of [trauma informed practice](#).

HOW DO WE PROMOTE ENGAGEMENT?

- Take a person-centered, strength-based approach- find out what is working well already.
- Be mindful of the language you use. Try to avoid language that has the potential to re-traumatise.
- Think creatively about how you can reach out to service users rather than expecting them to adjust to meet service needs.

WHAT CAN HELP?

- Stability and consistency
- Developing friendships, hobbies, interests, and support networks
- Counselling – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), trauma-specific therapy
- Alternative therapies e.g., art therapy, animal therapy, walking therapy and meditation
- A multi-agency approach to meeting a person's needs.





TEAM AROUND THE PERSON



- Where possible, identify a professional(s) who will take the lead.
- Identify whether the person is receiving any informal support and whether this can continue. Sometimes assumptions are made about what support is being provided when this is not the reality, or when circumstances have changed.
- It is important that professionals employ flexible and creative solutions within their practice to promote engagement.
- Be empathic and non-judgemental about the person's circumstances.
- Be tenacious in your engagement. It may take a long time to develop trust, particularly if the person has had a poor experience of professional support previously.
- Develop a relationship based on trust and honesty. Do what you say you will.

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](#)

SCIE

- [Social Care Institute for Excellence](#)
- [The New Social Worker – Article on preventing retraumatisation](#)

With thanks to Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board and

