

Self-Neglect – 7 Minute Briefing

1. Introduction

Self-neglect can describe a wide range of situations or behaviours. It could be someone not looking after their own health or personal care or not maintaining a home environment for so long that it becomes cluttered or dirty. It is sometimes associated with hoarding and may be a result of other issues, such as addictions. The Care Act (2014) lists self-neglect as a category of abuse under adult safeguarding and emphasises the importance of working together and taking preventative actions to mitigate risk.

2. What is self-neglect?

Examples of self-neglect include:

- Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety
- Neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings
- Inability to avoid harm as a result of self-neglect
- Failure to seek help or access services to meet health and social care needs
- Inability or unwillingness to manage one's personal affairs

Further Information can be found here:

[B&NES Self-Neglect Policy](#)

[Responding to Self-Neglect \(Lambeth SAB\)](#)

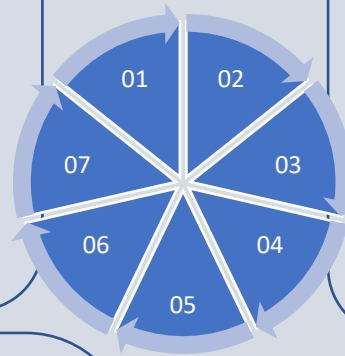
[Ann Craft Trust Resources](#)

[SCIE Resources](#)

7. What have Safeguarding Adult Reviews told us?

The importance of:

- Information sharing and collaborative working
- Robust risk assessment and review of risk assessments
- Understanding and application of legislation (MCA)
- If the risks aren't reducing, seek further support and guidance.
- Reflect on practice and escalate concerns where necessary



3. What causes Self-Neglect?

It is not always possible to establish a root cause for self-neglecting behaviours, but it can be as a result of:

- A person's brain injury, dementia or other mental disorder
- Obsessive compulsive disorder or hoarding disorder
- Physical illness which has an effect on abilities, energy levels, attention span, organisational skills or motivation
- Reduced motivation as a side effect of medication
- Addictions
- Traumatic life change

6. The Legal Framework Continued

Safeguarding

The Local Authority must make, or cause to be made, whatever enquiries it thinks necessary to enable it to decide what action should be taken in an adult's case, when the Local Authority has reasonable cause to suspect that an adult in its area:

- 1) has needs for care and support,
- 2) is experiencing, or is at risk of, self-neglect, and
- 3) as a result of those needs is unable to protect him or herself against self-neglect, or the risk of it. (Care Act 2014 s.42)

Mental Capacity Act 2005

The Mental Capacity Act (2005) states that a person is assumed to have mental capacity unless there is a reason to believe otherwise. It also states that a person should not be deemed to lack mental capacity just because they make an 'eccentric or unwise' decision. In view of the nature of self-neglect, it is important that capacity assessments are carried out face to face where possible.

5. The Legal Framework

The Care Act 2014 places specific duties on the Local Authority in relation to self-neglect, as follows:

Assessment

The Local Authority must undertake a needs assessment, even when the adult refuses, where:

- 1) it appears that the adult may have needs for care and support,
- 2) and is experiencing, or is at risk of, self-neglect. (Care Act 2014 sections 9 and 11)

This duty applies whether the adult is making a capacitated or incapacitated refusal of assessment.

4. What are the issues?

People who self-neglect often decline help from others, in many cases they do not feel they need it and there are limitations to what professionals can do if the adult has the mental capacity to make their own decisions about how they live.

Working with people who self-neglect can be challenging and they may refuse support or fail to acknowledge the problem, but it is essential that all efforts are made to engage with and support the individual and actions are clearly recorded.