

7 Minute Briefing : Self Neglect

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What Should I Do?

- Try and find out what the adult wants.
- Share concerns with any agency involved.
- Think family – is anyone else at risk because of the self neglect?
- Speak to someone about your concerns.

Further information:

- [Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board Self Neglect and Hoarding](#)
- www.helpforhoarders.co.uk
- www.hoardinguk.org
- <https://www.scie.org.uk/adults/safeguarding/selfneglect/>

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Background

Self neglect is defined as covering a wide range of behaviours – neglecting one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

Examples of self-neglect include:

- Lack of self-care – examples: neglect of personal hygiene, nutrition, hydration, health, thereby endangering safety and well-being,
- Lack of care of one’s environment – examples: squalor and hoarding and refusal of services that would lessen the risk of harm.

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Why it Matters

Without early intervention, existing health problems may be made worse. Neglect of personal hygiene may mean that the person suffers social difficulties and isolation, physical and mental health breakdown. Dilapidated property or excess rubbish can become infested and can be a fire risk, which is a risk to the adult, family, neighbours and others.

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Mental Capacity

Understanding and assessing the adult’s mental capacity is crucial. A mentally competent person, who understands the consequences of his/her decisions, may make a conscious and voluntary decision to engage in acts that threaten his/her health or safety as a matter of personal choice. A person without capacity may not understand the consequences of their actions and we have a duty of care to support them.



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Health

Self neglect has been linked to physical health problems, mental health issues, substance misuse, psychological and social factors, diminished social networks, personality traits, traumatic histories and life changing events.

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Safeguarding

Self neglect is a safeguarding issue when the person who self neglects has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect (including self neglect) and as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect. It may also be a safeguarding concern if the adult who is self-neglecting is a carer for an adult at risk. In these circumstances, always discuss the concerns with Safeguarding.

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Self Neglect Includes:

Living in grossly unsanitary conditions, suffering from an untreated illness, disease or injury, suffering from malnutrition to such an extent that, without an intervention, the adult's physical or mental health is likely to be severely impaired, creating a hazardous situation that will likely cause serious physical harm to the adult or others or cause substantial damage to or loss of assets.