



Safer Seven

On: Self-Neglect



1. 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
- Lack of care of one’s environment
- Refusal of services that would lessen the risk of harm

2. 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 or isolation, physical and or mental health breakdown, deterioration in mental health.

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.

Self-neglect could also lead to significant health problems such as pressure areas and even death.

3. Information

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

4. Self-Neglect includes:

- Living in grossly unsanitary conditions,
- Suffering from an untreated illness, disease or injury, possibly due to non-attendance at appointments
- 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.
- Social isolation

5. Information

Self-Neglect is a safeguarding issue when the person who self neglects has care and support needs (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. In some cases, the self-neglect could be considered as the care and support needs.

It may also be a safeguarding concern if the adult who is self-neglecting is a carer for an adult at risk.

6. Understanding and assessing the adult’s mental capacity is crucial.

A mentally competent person, who understands the consequences of their decisions, may make a conscious and voluntary decision to engage in acts that threaten their 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.

7. Further information:

If you believe an adult is self-neglecting and this is causing them significant harm, call 0300 555 0055 or use the Dudley Adults Portal: <https://adultsocialcare.dudley.gov.uk/>

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