



PRACTITIONERS GUIDE



What is Self-Neglect?

Self-neglect is: the inability (intentional or non-intentional) to maintain a socially and culturally accepted standard of self-care with the potential for serious consequences to the health and well-being of the self-neglecters [people who self-neglect] and perhaps even to their community. (Gibbons, 2006). An individual may be considered as self-neglecting and therefore maybe at risk of harm where they are:

- Either unable, or unwilling to provide adequate care for themselves;
- Unable or unwilling to obtain necessary care to meet their needs; and/or
- Declining essential support without which their health and safety needs cannot be met.

How do you recognise Self-Neglect?

You may know that you are already working with people who self-neglect. Even if you haven't yet directly worked with people who self-neglect you may have seen TV or news items covering related issues e.g. people who have died in concerning conditions, or as a result of untreated infections, as well as programmes on the related issue of hoarding. People who hoard do not always self-neglect and vice versa. The list below, contains some of the indicators of self neglect:

- Living in very unclean environment for example rodent infestation or living with a toilet completely blocked with faeces;
- Neglecting household maintenance, and therefore creating hazards or fire risks for example rotten floorboards creating trip hazards; or lack of boiler or electrical maintenance;
- Having eccentric behaviour/ lifestyles, such as obsessive hoarding;
- Poor diet and nutrition. For example, there is little or no fresh food in the fridge, or food is mouldy and very out of date;
- Refusing necessary help from health and / or social care staff in relation to personal hygiene and care;
- Having poor personal hygiene, poor healing / sores, long toe nails;

Working with self-neglect can be a complex, potentially challenging and distressing area for professionals, and those affected by it. It is particularly difficult when a person has mental capacity and is refusing services. The NSAB procedures will apply when you are working with a person identified at risk of harm through self-neglect.

What do I do if I am concerned about someone?

If you become aware that a person is self-neglecting and appropriate steps are not taken to respond, there is a real risk of the situation worsening and may eventually result in permanent damage to a person's mental or physical health or even death. If there are immediate serious risks to life and limb, you should consider if it is necessary to call emergency services (e.g. ambulance) and any other immediate actions required to minimise the risk to the individual or others. If you work in health or social care or any other agency or professional group with an obligation under safeguarding you have a positive obligation to report any issues of self neglect that you may come across to the appropriate agency. The purpose of reporting issues is to ensure there is a co-ordinated response to serious risks identified for a person who is self-neglecting.

How do I report suspected Self-Neglect?

If you are concerned about someone who may be at risk of harm from self-neglect you should gather as much information as possible, including, if known, clear immediate risks; Information should include if known:

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| • Persons Name | • Contact Details | • What are the risks |
| • State of Property including fire risks | • Appearance of person | • Health concerns (physical / mental) |
| • Concerns about mental capacity | • Any Animals | |

You should also try to include any details you may have about the person's history including carers, family, social networks, work history and any previous refusals of help.

There are a number of agencies and organisations that can help with a person who may be suffering from self-neglect. In the first instance professionals should contact Adult Social Care on 0300 126 1000 option 2.