



# Self-Neglect Learning Briefing

## What is self-neglect?

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.

The Care Act recognises self-neglect as a category of abuse and emphasises the importance of working together to take preventative actions to minimise risk. The need for safeguarding processes is dependent on risk levels. Lower levels of risk could be addressed by:

- Care Act assessment
- Signposting to alternative support
- Arranging mental health and/or health support

Safeguarding processes may be required if there are significant risks, such as:

- Risk of life-threatening consequences e.g., fire risk, substance misuse, self-harm
- Risk to tenancy or home security
- Non-engagement with essential treatment or support
- Being vulnerable to exploitation or domestic abuse
- Environment presents high risks, such as inadequate plumbing, washing or toileting facilities
- Little or no informal support networks

## What are the possible signs of self-neglect?

- Excessively unclean/cluttered home, signs of vermin, hoarding
- Neglecting household maintenance
- Unkempt personal appearance, malnutrition, dehydration
- Declining essential health or social care support
- Financial debt issues

## What are the possible reasons for self-neglect?

- Physical/mental health problems, substance misuse
- Psychological and social factors
- Diminished social networks
- Traumatic histories and life-changing events

## What have Safeguarding Adult Reviews told us?

Importance of:

- Information-sharing and collaborative working
- Robust face to face assessment/risk assessment
- Understanding of legislation e.g., Mental Capacity Act
- Challenging and reflecting on practice
- Robust guidance to assist practitioners
- Assessment processes involving the Adult/carers/significant others

## What is the self-neglect process in West Sussex?

### 1. Self-neglecting identified, consider

- Immediate actions required to minimise risk
- Arranging a multi-agency meeting
- Requesting a social care assessment
- Raise a safeguarding concern

### 2. Identify lead agency

If there is a Safeguarding Enquiry, this will be the Local Authority. In other cases, this could be another agency because:

- The agency is already involved
- The agency has a duty of care
- The agency holds significant information
- The Adult has shown a likelihood to engage with them and/or
- Needs appear to relate to the service provided by that agency

### 3. Lead agency coordinates information gathering

In order to consider the most appropriate actions to address the concerns raised and consider the Adult's mental capacity.

### 4. Multi-agency meeting

Lead agency convenes a meeting under the self-neglect procedures to:

- Consider risks and issues of mental capacity
- Share information between agencies
- Devise a shared action plan

Lead agency involves the Adult concerned as much as possible and/or their representative/advocate.

### 5. Comprehensive assessment of risk

Outcomes are determined and risk addressed, resulting in:

- Support accepted
- Ongoing monitoring

Outcomes are determined and risk remains, resulting in:

- Escalation (to risk panels if available/senior managers/legal services)/ongoing monitoring
- Repeat multi-agency meetings
- Safeguarding concern raised where required

For full details, further advice and guidance please see the [Pan-Sussex Multi-Agency Procedure](#) and listen to our [Self-Neglect Podcast](#).

## Resources you can use to ensure your practice is current

### [Policies, procedures, and protocols](#)

- Sussex Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Sussex Threshold Guidance
- Sussex Information Sharing Protocol
- Sussex Escalation and Resolution Protocol

Other related [learning briefings and podcasts](#) including,

- Making Safeguarding Personal
- Safeguarding early warning signs
- What is Safeguarding
- Multi-agency working and communication
- Person centered approaches
- Professional curiosity
- Risk assessment

As of April 2023, we also have [3 published SARs](#) with a theme of self-neglect

- Thematic SAR
- BK Desktop Review
- SAR MT

For cases where an Adult is putting themselves or others at significant risk by refusing services, and all options have been explored and the level of risk is still high, a referral to our Multi-agency Risk Management Subgroup [MARM](#) should be considered. Please note: a fully updated risk assessment will be required with a referral.