



Self-neglect staff survey outcomes: learning briefing

Why we did the survey

In 2023/24 we carried out a staff survey to understand your experiences of working with adults who self-neglect. We did this because self-neglect is one of our priorities for 2023-24 and 2024-25. This survey also relates to the actions from the self-neglect meta-analysis. Details of this review can be found on the [statutory publications](#) page of our website.

The survey covered issues, barriers, and positive factors in working with people who self-neglect. This learning briefing provides a summary of the survey results.

Who completed the survey

112 members of staff completed the survey. 75% were completed in the West Sussex area, 9% in Brighton & Hove, 6% in East Sussex, and 10% by pan-Sussex agencies. The agency that provided the most responses was West Sussex County Council.

The issues

The survey asked staff for their views about the main issues in working with self-neglect cases. The three issues chosen most often were:

- Non-engagement
- Mental health concerns
- Health issues as a result of self-neglect

The barriers

The survey asked staff for their views about the main barriers in working with self-neglect cases. The three barriers chosen most often were:

- Operational pressures/resource shortages/workload pressures
- Issues with multi-agency working/coordination of support
- Difficulties in establishing and maintaining contact

Positive factors

The survey asked staff for their views about the positive factors in working with self-neglect cases. All the positive factors chosen were:

- Support and guidance from colleagues
- Positive outcomes for the adult
- Positive multi-agency working/coordination of support
- Good quality management oversight and support
- Support/guidance from other professionals/agencies
- Positive feedback from the adult/their representative
- Available resources and guidance
- Support from the Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM) subgroup
- Other

Staff confidence

The survey asked staff to rate their confidence levels in working with self-neglect in the following areas.

Recognising self-neglect

- Confident 71%
- My confidence needs some improvement 27%
- My confidence needs a great deal of improvement 2%

Responding to self-neglect

- Confident 51%
- My confidence needs some improvement 45%
- My confidence needs a great deal of improvement 4%

Multi-agency working

- Confident 50%
- My confidence needs some improvement 48%
- My confidence needs a great deal of improvement 2%

Understanding/assessing decisions about Mental Capacity

- Confident 45%
- My confidence needs some improvement 45%
- My confidence needs a great deal of improvement 10%

Understanding of risk assessment and risk management

- Confident 50%
- My confidence needs some improvement 48%
- My confidence needs a great deal of improvement 2%

Overall, the answers suggest that staff need more support to increase their confidence in working with self-neglect.

Suggestions for support included:

- Bite-sized updates
- Training course
- Shadowing opportunities
- Clearer responsibilities
- Online webinars delivered by experts
- An online directory of resources
- More information about mental capacity and best interest assessments
- Case studies

Self-neglect and the cost of living

The survey asked staff if they had noticed an impact from the cost of living on self-neglect. Around 61% said “yes” and around 39% said “no”. Examples of the impact were:

- Patients are making choices concerning food shopping and heating.

- Customers are asking to reduce or cancel a package of care, even when they have recently had a financial assessment.
- Low income and unwise financial decisions are impacting quality of life.
- Customers have reported not being able to afford prescriptions.
- Social isolation as a result of spending decisions.
- An increase in self-neglect and fire risk.

Policy and guidance

The survey asked staff how useful the [Thresholds Guidance](#) is, in understanding the threshold for safeguarding and self-neglect.

- 9% said it was excellent
- 54% said it was good
- 24% said it was average
- 9% said it was fair
- 3% said it was poor

The survey asked staff how they rated the self-neglect section of the [Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures](#).

- 11% said it was excellent
- 53% said it was good
- 24% said it was average
- 11% said it was fair
- 1% said it was poor

Overall, this suggests that most staff feel that the guidance is clear. However, staff were asked if improvements could be made. Some suggestions were:

- Staff need more time to read policy, procedures, and guidance.
- Staff need to be reminded of the resources available.
- We need to be flexible in our approach to people who self-neglect.
- Low-level self-neglect concerns can quickly escalate. The safeguarding threshold is high and clients are at crisis point before meeting the threshold for safeguarding.
- Staff need guidance around what is a reasonable number of contact attempts before closing the case due to non-engagement.
- A checklist of actions from the self-neglect procedure would be useful.

- There needs to be more consistent use of the self-neglect procedure.

What now?

We have shared the results of the survey with our Board and in this learning briefing and podcast.

The self-neglect meta-analysis review panel will consider the suggestions for improvement. These suggestions may inform changes to policy, procedure, and guidance.

In 2024-25 we will hold self-neglect staff briefing sessions.

Further reading

To extend your learning and ensure your practice is current, please refer to the following resources:

- [Self-neglect meta-analysis](#)
- [Self-neglect learning resources](#)

To support your Continual Professional Development (CPD) we have created a [CPD Reflective Log](#) for your use. Use this to reflect on the professional development that you complete using our resources.